

**Relatives and Disciples
of the Buddha**

**This book is dedicated to my family,
good friends and relatives who have
consistently encouraged and
supported me in my gift of Dhamma**

**Cover design: Sashika Abeysekera
Jay Jawroski**

**Monks and Nuns preserve the Buddha Dhamma for future
generations through practice and teaching ensuring the
movement from darkness (ignorance) to light (wisdom).**

Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha



“So it happens Kassapa, when beings deteriorate and the true Dhamma vanishes: then there are more rules and fewer Arahants. There will be, however, no vanishing of the Dhamma until a sham Dhamma arises in the world. But when a sham Dhamma arises in the world, there will be more rules and fewer Arahants.”

“But Kassapa, it is not a cataclysm of the four elements - earth, water, fire and air that make the Dhamma disappear. Nor is the reason for its disappearance similar to the overloading of a ship that causes it to sink. It is rather the presence of five detrimental attitudes that causes the obscuration and disappearance of the Dhamma.”

“These are the five: It is the lack of respect and regard for the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the training, and for meditative concentration on the part of monks, nuns, and male and female devotees. But so long as there is respect and regard for these five things the Dhamma will remain free of obscuration and will not disappear.”

Gotama Buddha
Samyutta Nikāya

*I gratefully acknowledge the
Ottawa Buddhist Association
Newsletter for providing this
picture of the face of the Buddha*

Foreword

I admire Mrs. Radhika Abeysekera's fifth book in her series of Buddhist books. She is an untiring writer who writes on Buddhadhamma with confidence. She tries to fulfil the Noble Path of Right Effort and her efforts have become very fruitful. Her past four books are very popular among readers. Now her readers have a new book to enjoy.

As I see it, the reason for the popularity of her books is her confidence (sradha) in the Buddhadhamma. Many authors write about the Buddhadhamma and how it relates to modern society. Even though the Dhamma (Truth) applies to the past, present and future, if the author does not have a clear understanding of the changing nature of the world – the nature of impermanence, it is not easy to explain the way of the Dhamma to modern society.

The teaching of the Dhamma must be done with understanding and confidence. When we go to a doctor and request treatment for our ailments, we have confidence in the doctor's treatment. We have to approach the Dhamma in the same way. Only then can we see the real way of the Buddha's teachings.

When we have confidence in the Dhamma, we see the real nature of the Dhamma. When we explain the Dhamma in writing, we must write with full knowledge and compassion so that others can acquire that same understanding.

In this book, and in Mrs. Abeysekera's previous writings, she inspires the reader with her confidence in the Dhamma. This particular characteristic of her writing captures the attention of the readers. When you read her stories you can see how she presents the Dhamma in each story. When you read her stories you feel as if you are listening to a virtuous, Buddhist woman explaining the teachings with complete confidence in the Triple Gem – the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

As we do not have many books like this written in English, this work is a generous contribution towards the understanding of

the Dhamma for students living outside of Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries. We need more books like this which will help children to develop the correct knowledge required to live with wholesome values in this modern society.

It is a pity that the modern world does not recognize the importance of these human values that existed in the past: values that brought calmness and contentment to the minds of all people in society. These values are slowly disappearing from use and practice. Many good values such as patience, forbearance, tolerance, generosity, morality, gratitude, loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, altruism and such other noble human qualities are missing from our daily practice. They are not taught to our children in the modern world.

Children are not taught to be tolerant, patient and generous; instead they are taught that it is acceptable to retaliate, to be unforgiving and selfish. We can see in many children's television programs that producers do not think about the development of good values in the children's minds. We cannot see evidence of even the slightest attention being paid through programming efforts to children's moral development. As a result, future generations will develop into societies lacking in good qualities. The world will miss wholesomeness and society will have no real human values.

The degeneration of human values is seen everywhere in society. To avoid this, we should encourage our children and adolescents to read more about religious and historical characters such as are found in this book. How can we expect a peaceful and happy society when we neglect the moral education of our children?

It is very important to understand that good values can be easily forgotten. It is difficult to develop good values in the minds of people who possess dormant unwholesome qualities such as greed, anger and delusion in their inner minds. Our fault today is that we expect happiness and peace by spending money but we have no time to reflect and don't try to understand how to acquire true happiness or peace. Unhappiness and absence of peace appear but we do not understand how to get rid of them.

Without knowing the root cause we try to treat the symptoms of the disease.

The Buddha's advice for this is to understand, discipline the mind, and eradicate the cause, or the root of the disease. It is good to understand before attempting to uproot the cause. It is not wise to ignore, suppress or run away from the problem. Our children are unfortunate in that they are not given the instruction that will teach them to correct these characteristics in school.

In the old days people had time to teach this to children. Unfortunately, modern children are missing this opportunity. They are not given this instruction at home, in school or at church. Adults expect calm and peaceful behaviour from children without first teaching them to behave and live in peace and harmony.

The average modern American child gets only ten minutes a day to talk with his parents as the parents are busy with their daily work. How can we expect innocent children who know nothing of the realities of this world to do as we want if we do not take the time to teach the values required to accomplish this?

Without first instructing our children or teaching them through example, we describe the concept of human rights and we speak about their rights. We encourage them to search for their rights. What rights can they earn without first learning to respect their parents and elders? It is the duty of the parents who brought the children into this world to teach them good qualities at home. Teaching them how to earn money only does not complete their education. It is also important to teach them the manners and human qualities and values that will allow them to live peacefully and happily as productive members of society. They have no other way of acquiring this knowledge if we do not teach them, for they came to this world without knowing the true nature of the world.

This point must be understood by scientists, psychologists and educators. Those who perform research in education have

forgotten this important aspect. This is a missing and often neglected concept in modern society and in the field of education.

We are thankful to Mrs. Radhika Abeysekera, who tries to educate our adults as well as our children by teaching the Dhamma as our ancestors did in Sri Lanka. A strong sense of learning and effort in Sri Lanka enabled people to build, even without modern machinery, great reservoirs, nine-story buildings and magnificent temples, the ruins of which can still be seen today, two thousand or more years later. I would like to draw our educators' minds to think about this and to suggest an arrangement that would fulfil this missing aspect of our innocent children's education.

I hope our readers, who have been waiting to read Mrs. Abeysekera's writings on the Dhamma, will be happy to gain the knowledge of the practical human values that are slowly vanishing from our society. My good wishes and loving-kindness to all. May all beings be well and happy!

Kurunegoda Piyatissa (Nayaka Maha Thera)
New York Buddhist Vihara
August 3, 1999

Preface

Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha, which is the second book in the series of Buddhism books that I have written, is my fifth publication. Once the students have knowledge of the life story of the Buddha, they need to be introduced to His relatives and disciples. Parents or educators should introduce the students to the appropriate life stories as they mature in the Dhamma. They will then have a strong foundation and background, which will enhance their studies in the Dhamma.

This book is also written for the purpose of encouraging young students to emulate the lives of these heroic men and women. It has been written using plain language, structured in short chapters, and illustrated by some of the young children of Canada and Sri Lanka so as to appeal to the younger reader.

The positions held by the Buddha's close relatives and disciples were not chance happenings. They were positions that each of them had aspired to many aeons ago. They were positions of honour towards which each of them had worked tirelessly over many life cycles. As such, I wanted to include in each of these life histories the true beginning – the point at which the aspiration was made. I have researched and attempted to document the true beginning of many of the Buddha's close relatives and disciples. It should be noted, however, that the Buddha had eighty great disciples on whom He conferred titles, and many thousands of disciples. As it was not possible to include all of them, a selection was made based on their contribution to the preservation of the Dhamma and on availability of material.

I was inspired and suffused with happiness when I worked on these life histories. These great men and women had worked tirelessly over many lifetimes, so that many years later we could still have access to the Dhamma by practising the teaching that they preserved and by following their example. I was inspired, not only because of the fortitude and effort displayed by the Buddha's disciples, but also because of their

determination to renew their aspiration through countless life cycles. They each had the same goal – to help the Buddha in His mission to enlighten men and gods by showing them the path to eradicate suffering. But because of the nature and disposition of each person, each chose a different role and made different aspirations in keeping with their natures.

Mahā Māyā aspired to be the mother of the Buddha. Her aspiration, made many aeons ago, was to bring to birth a child who would be The Enlightened One. Yasodharā, His wife, aspired to be His helpmate. Over countless lives she worked tirelessly, supporting His every decision, and actively participated in helping Him complete the ten perfections. Mahā Pajapati, on the other hand, aspired to institute and form the order of the nuns (Bhikkhuni). Sāriputta aspired to be the Buddha's first chief disciple and foremost in wisdom. He was the true son of the Dhamma and assisted the Buddha in setting in motion the Wheel of Wisdom. Mahā Moggallāna chose to be His second chief disciple and foremost in supernatural powers. By using His supernatural powers and his ability to teach he helped many thousands to have confidence in the Dhamma and strive for emancipation. Kassapa aspired to be foremost in austere practices. After the Buddha's Parinibbāna they needed a role model who was pure and austere. It would have been easy to fall into lax practices and materialism. But Mahā Kassapa was there to help guide and preserve the Dhamma.

Each of the great disciples chose a different attribute in which to excel. Then, using this attribute, they helped the Buddha in the teaching and preservation of the Dhamma for future generations. What wonderful role models for our children! Researching the life stories of these great persons gave me added strength to continue in my mission of teaching the Dhamma and assisting in its preservation for future generations.

The Buddha had many supernatural and psychic powers. In general, however, He did not resort to miracles and psychic phenomena when teaching the Dhamma. This is because the attainment of psychic powers is not the Buddhist goal. The

Buddhist goal is Nibbāna - the total destruction of suffering. He did not want His followers, enticed by miracles, to seek psychic powers as opposed to the supreme bliss of Nibbāna. There were, however, instances when He used his psychic powers to prepare His audience for the Dhamma. At times the pride of the people or their need for the supernatural had to be addressed first. And so we have instances like the Twin Wonder (Twin Miracle) that the Buddha performed to destroy the pride of the Sakyans.

Though the powers of the Buddha far exceeded those of His disciples, many of them also had supernatural and psychic powers. In attaining Arahantship the great disciples acquired the ability to see into their past births in 100,000 world cycles. Four of His disciples, Sāriputta, Mahā Moggallāna, Yasodharā and Bakkula, could see back into infinite periods of time. Arahants like Mahā Moggallāna, Mahā Kassapa and Anuruddha had the power to visit the celestial and Brahma realms at will. Anuruddha could also view 1,000 world systems.

In this book I have included instances of such supernatural powers. I have also attempted to cross-reference such instances by comparing the teachings of the Buddha to those of the great disciples. Over time, it is possible for the original words of the Buddha to be changed through translation errors and poetic embellishment of authors. The Buddha, who recognized this possibility, left us a set of instructions to follow before we accepted His teachings as absolute. I have also included in this book the way in which the Arahants preserved the Dhamma. This will help the reader to form an opinion on the authenticity of the material. The Buddha's instruction, known as the Mahāpadesa, and by which His words should be tested, is as follows:

“A Bhikkhu may say thus - From the mouth of the Buddha Himself have I heard, have I received thus: This is the Doctrine, this is the Discipline, this is the Teaching of the Master. His words should not be accepted or rejected. Without either accepting or rejecting such words, study thoroughly every word and syllable and then put them beside the Discourse

(teachings) and compare with the Monastic Disciplinary Rules. If, when so compared, they do not harmonize with the Discourses and do not agree to the Disciplinary Rules, then you may come to the conclusion: Certainly this is not the word of the Exalted One, this has been wrongly grasped by the Bhikkhu. Therefore you should reject it. If, when compared and contrasted, they harmonize with the Discourses and the Disciplinary Rules, you may come to the conclusion: Certainly this is the word of the Exalted One, this has correctly been grasped by the Bhikkhu. Let this be regarded as the first reference.”

The Buddha then went on to dispense the second, third and fourth reference by substituting the words, “Heard from the mouth of the Buddha”, with, “Heard from the mouth of the Sangha, Heard from the mouth of the Thera, and Heard from the mouth of Theri.”

It should also be pointed out that the reader has the choice of accepting or not accepting these events. In the Gnānasārasamuccaya the Buddha said, **“As the wise test gold by burning, cutting, and rubbing (on a piece of touchstone), so are you to accept my words after examining them and not out of regard for me.”** As such, we should always examine and question the Teachings and accept that which appeal to our reason. The acceptance or non-acceptance of such phenomena does not in any way affect a person’s ability to attain Nibbāna. It does, however, add to a better understanding of the spiritual development of the minds of Arahants.

In addition to introducing the reader to some of the close relatives and great disciples of the Buddha, this book illustrates the exceedingly long time it takes (about 100,000 world cycles) to fulfil a great aspiration and attain Arahantship. The majority of these persons received the definite proclamation regarding the certainty of the fulfilment of their aspirations at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha. Yasodharā and His chief male disciples took even longer to fulfil their aspirations, as the level of perfection required was greater. And even though documentation was not available, the possibility exists that these great disciples were striving for these positions and

completing virtues even prior to their encounter with the Padumuttara Buddha. It seems very plausible that a certain level of wisdom and spiritual development would have been required for the Padumuttara Buddha to be able to prophesy the certainty of their achieving their goal.

I hope this book will inspire the reader to understand how fortunate we are that these great disciples had the courage and determination to perfect themselves over aeons of time to assist us in our emancipation. **Their goal was not just to attain Arahantship. It was to attain Arahantship with great attributes which would assist the Buddha in His aspiration to help humanity for many generations, by showing them the path to the total destruction of suffering.** It is hoped that this book will inspire others to make similar aspirations, so that future generations may benefit by our efforts just as we are benefiting by the efforts of these great disciples.

This book was not written for the purpose of introducing the Buddha's teaching. However, it would have been remiss of me not to use the opportunity to introduce the teachings when documenting the life history of Mahā Kaccāna. Mahā Kaccāna was foremost in explaining in detail the profound sayings of the Buddha to help novice monks and lay disciples who were not spiritually mature. To illustrate Mahā Kaccāna's contribution to the world, I have included some examples from Mahā Kaccāna's teachings. As Kaccāna was consulted to explain profound and complex teachings, these are for the advanced student. I have attempted to simplify the teachings but it must be recognized that these are teachings from the Abhidhamma and as such are more suitable for the advanced student than the beginner.

Dr. Dewarāja, who presented a paper at the University of Western Australia on "The Positions of Women in Buddhism", studied the women of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Tibet over a period of time before the impact of Western influence and compared them to women in other Asian Countries. **She concluded that "Buddhism saved the daughter from indignity, elevated the wife to a position approximating to equality, and retrieved the widow from abject misery."** I

have attempted to bring out the enormous service that the Buddha performed to women when He instigated the order of the Nuns and proclaimed that women were as capable as men of attaining spiritual heights. The position of women and the beliefs at that time were such that women were treated with great disrespect. I have attempted to bring to light society's treatment of women at the time of the Buddha and the gratitude that His female disciples felt towards Him for giving them the opportunity for emancipation.

This book, as the other books I have written, is my contribution towards the preservation of the Dhamma for future generations. May I, through this work, continue to develop wisdom, analytical skills and clarity of vision, so that I can transfer the knowledge I have acquired to others with ease, with a view to Nibbāna. **I also hope that reading this book will inspire others to make similar aspirations, because what one person has done another person can do.**

Whilst I researched many books to obtain the material required for this book, special mention needs to be made of some of the pioneers who translated the Pāli text to English. Professor Rhys Davids, whose father was a Christian clergyman, decided to study the Pāli language and Buddhism for the purpose of proving the superiority of the Christian faith. Instead, Professor Davids modelled his life on the Buddha's Noble Path and, together with his wife, Mrs. Davids, left a beautiful legacy of the Pāli text in English. As many as possible of the Theragāthā, or sayings of the elders, were taken from the book Psalms of the Brethren. Due to difficulties in obtaining the original translation, The Elders Verses I, Theragāthā and The Elders Verses II, Therigāthā by the Pāli Text Society of Oxford, as well as the beautiful work, Great Disciples of the Buddha, of the American-born Bhikku, Bhodī, were used as supplements. Compilations of the lives of the great disciples of the Buddha by the German-born monk, Ven. Nyānaponika, and the German scholar, Hellmuth Heckle, were also invaluable in my research. My grateful appreciation to these forefathers for their dedication in translating the Pāli text into English, for the purpose of preserving the Dhamma. Through this book, these international pioneers have contributed to the Dhamma

knowledge of many more generations of international students.

Many people contributed their time and effort to make this book special. Children of Canada and Sri Lanka, many of whom are my students, enhanced this text with their beautiful drawings. The children's perspective of the stories adds a touching depth which brings to life the great persons who preserved the Dhamma so that it would be available for them to study many years later. Their contribution, which has made this book a living memory of my Dhamma classes, is greatly appreciated.

As in the past Ven. Kurunagoda Piyatissa (Nāyaka Mahā Thera) encouraged me in my efforts by writing the foreword and reviewing the book for accuracy and improvement. His vast knowledge of the Dhamma continues to be an invaluable resource in my work. His strength, patience and selfless devotion to the Buddha Dhamma is greatly appreciated.

My good friend, Adrienne Bouchard Langlois, has worked tirelessly in enriching this text with her careful editing. She has undertaken the editing of this book at a time when great demands were being made on her free time. Despite her other commitments, she has ensured the quality of this book by going over this material again and again. The editing of a book is meticulous work that requires countless hours of concentrated effort. Her contribution to this book cannot be measured. Her friendship is a constant source of strength and her determination, inspiration and high standards are now an integral part of my work. My appreciation of her labour of love is boundless.

My friend, Jay Jawroski, has scanned the children's drawings and enriched them through her expertise, to reproduce in vibrant colours. Her beautiful work has enhanced the children's illustrations and helped to bring to life the stories of the great disciples. Her generosity, compassion and experience of life have helped to strengthen my resolve and commitment in the preservation of the Dhamma for future generations. Her effort and support is greatly appreciated.

My books are now available on the Internet so that readers

from all parts of the globe will have free access to them. Even with the generous help of sponsors, I was experiencing great difficulties in keeping up with the costs of free distribution. The demand far exceeded my supply of books. My friend, Masoud Moradi-Teleghani, has selflessly shared his technical expertise and developed my web site so that students all over the world now have access to my books. The beautiful title page was Masoud's representation of my work. With his title "From Turmoil to Peace" he effectively captured what I hoped to give to future generations through the Buddha Dhamma. The countless hours he spent formatting this work in HTML, a language that does not have Pāli fonts, is greatly appreciated. His technical and artistic abilities, compassion and quiet strength have been an invaluable resource in my work.

And last but not least I would like to thank my family for their consistent support of my work. The many hours I spend on my work is time away from them. By becoming involved in my work they have shared in my contribution to the preservation of the Dhamma. Together with many others they have encouraged me in my struggle to balance my career, family and writing. With understanding and patience they have provided the environment I need for research, teaching and writing. My grateful appreciation for their encouragement, understanding, and patience.

This book has been dedicated to my family, good friends and relatives who have supported me throughout the years in the preservation of the Buddha Dhamma. May I have the opportunity to assist them throughout samsara in their journey to enlightenment. May all beings find peace and lasting happiness!

Radhika Abeysekera
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winnipeg.freenet.mb.ca/slam/buddhism/

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Part I

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CHAPTER 1

King Suddhodana

King Suddhodana, who was of the Sākyan caste, was a righteous king who ruled over Kapilavatthu. As a young prince he excelled in warfare and swordsmanship. After a victorious battle his father, King Sihahanu, offered him a boon. He requested permission to marry the beautiful sisters, Mahā Māyā and Pajāpati. Even though in many other kingdoms in India it was accepted for the king to have more than one consort, this was not the custom in Kapilavatthu. The Sākyans were monogamous and as such Prince Suddhodana had to receive special permission to marry the noble princesses who were of the Koliya caste. Prince Suddhodana wished to make both princesses his consorts as he had heard that one of the two sisters would give birth to a noble son who would bring great happiness to mankind.

For many years his chief consort, Queen Mahā Māyā, had no children. Then, almost twenty years after their marriage, she gave birth to a baby prince whom they named Siddhattha, meaning *wish-fulfilled*.

King Suddhodana first recognized the extraordinary qualities of their child when the Sage Asita came to visit the baby. Asita, who was renowned for his wisdom and was a teacher to King Suddhodana, visited the palace on hearing of the birth of the prince. The king carried the baby to Asita for his blessing. To their surprise, the baby moved and placed His feet on Asita's head. The wise Asita then examined the markings on the baby's feet, and kneeling before the young prince, paid homage to Him. Asita then predicted that this noble baby would one day be a Buddha and show the world the path to the end of

suffering. King Suddhodana, seeing the learned Asita salute the baby prince, followed suit, saying, “Son, this is my first act of obeisance.”

King Suddhodana paid homage to the prince for the second time during the royal ploughing festival. It was the custom at that time to herald the new growing season with festivities. The nurses, observing that the baby prince was asleep, joined in the festivities and merry-making. When they returned they found the prince meditating while sitting cross-legged a few feet above the ground. Alarmed, they informed the king of the extraordinary feat. The king then knelt and saluted the baby prince for the second time, saying, “Son, this is my second act of obeisance.”

Despite the fact that two sages had predicted that the prince would be a Buddha, King Suddhodana wanted his son to be a king. Four others had said that the baby would be a Buddha or a Universal Monarch. The king decided that he would surround the prince with luxury and ensure that he was totally shielded from suffering so as to ensure his royal lineage of an Universal Monarch. King Suddhodana did not want the baby prince to be a Buddha. However, the prince’s aspiration and effort over aeons of time had to be fulfilled. Prince Siddhattha left home in search of the Truth and attained enlightenment by realizing the path to the total destruction of suffering. After this, Prince Siddhattha was known as the Supreme Buddha Gotama.

The Buddha was in Rājagaha when there arose a strong desire in King Suddhodana to see his enlightened son. He sent courtiers inviting the Buddha to visit the city of His childhood. However, on hearing the Dhamma, messenger after messenger decided to remain with the Buddha and be ordained. Enjoying the bliss of Nibbāna, the courtiers did not convey the invitation to the Buddha. Finally, King Suddhodana sent his most trusted courtier, Kāludāyi, a playmate of Prince Siddhattha, to bring the Buddha back to Kapilavatthu. Kāludāyi agreed to give the message if the king gave him permission to be ordained as a monk.



When the Buddha arrived in Kapilavatthu the proud Sākya

elders decided that they would not pay homage to Him. Instead, they sent the younger princes and princesses to pay homage. The Buddha, seeing the pride of the Sākyaans and its hindrance to their attainment of spiritual development, performed the Twin Wonder. Red and blue rays that depicted fire and water radiated from either side of His body. The king, seeing the miracle, fell down on his knees and paid obeisance to the Buddha by saying, “Son, this is my third act of obeisance”. The Sākyaan elders, their pride subdued, followed King Suddhodana’s example and paid homage to the Buddha.

King Suddhodana assumed that the Buddha and His retinue of 20,000 monks would come to the palace for their meals on the following day. As such he did not invite the Buddha to the palace. Without an invitation, the Buddha decided that He would examine what His ancestors, the Buddhas of the past, did when they first visited their home city. Did they go uninvited, to their previous home? He observed that the Buddhas of the past had not automatically invited themselves. They had instead gone for alms from house to house. The Buddha, with His retinue of monks, followed the age-old tradition of seeking alms from every house.

Before long the message that his Son was begging for alms reached the king. Disturbed, he questioned the Buddha as to why He was insulting His father, the king, by begging for alms. The Buddha gently informed King Suddhodana that He was following the custom of His ancestors. The king replied, “How could that be? You are a Sākyaan Prince of the Solar Dynasty, with royal blood. None of our ancestors begged for their food.” The Buddha corrected the king by saying, “O King, you are referring to your lineage. I am of the Buddha lineage. The Buddhas of the past, when visiting their homecity for the first time, went from house to house seeking alms if they were not invited.”

The humility of the Great Buddha is observed in this simple action. Not only did the Buddha when in doubt seek counsel from the traditions of past Buddhas, but He also did not see any need for arrogance just because He came from a royal caste. He was an ascetic, a Buddha, and as such even in His homecity,

followed the customs of His ancestors.

King Suddhodana attained Arahantship in stages. He attained the first two stages of sainthood, Sotāpanna and Sakadāgāmi, on the Buddha's first visit after hearing a few lines on righteousness. The Buddha advised the king to lead a righteous, uncorrupted life, and that the righteous live happily in both this life and the next.

He attained the third stage of sainthood, Anāgāmi, on hearing the Dhammapāla Jātaka. When the Buddha was practising self-mortification, He had reduced His food intake to such an extent that His body was wasted and He often fainted from lack of nourishment. An erroneous message was sent to King Suddhodana that his son had passed away. The king, however, refused to believe the message, saying his son would not pass away before attaining His goal of enlightenment. The Buddha, on hearing this, dispensed the Dhammapāla Jātaka, a previous life story of another instance when they had been father and son. At that time, bones had been brought back by a messenger with the claim that his son had died. In that birth also, King Suddhodana had refused to believe that his son had died.

King Suddhodana attained the various stages of sainthood without renunciation. He chose to perform his royal duties and remain as the King of Kapilavatthu. Many years later, on hearing of His father's imminent death, the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu to give His last discourse to His father. On hearing the Dhamma, King Suddhodana attained Arahantship. Seven days later he passed away. The Buddha was about forty years old at the time of His father's death.



CHAPTER 2

Queen Māyā

Queen Mahā Māyā was the daughter of King Anjana and Queen Yasodharā of the Koliya caste. She was the chief consort of King Suddhodana and the mother of Prince Siddhattha. Her Sister, Mahā Pajāpati Gotami, was the second consort of King Suddhodana.

One night Queen Mahā Māyā had a strange dream. She dreamt that the Devas from the four directions of the earth took her to Lake Anotatta on top of the Himalayan Mountains. She was bathed in the lake and dressed in heavenly clothes and ornaments. A white baby elephant carrying a white lotus flower in its trunk trumpeted, and after circling around her three times, entered her body.

The next morning she told King Suddhodana of her dream. He consulted sages who, on hearing of the dream, predicted that the Queen would have a wise and noble baby boy. The king and queen were very happy for they had no children and were longing for a child.

According to the custom of that time, Queen Mahā Māyā decided to visit her mother so that she could be with her at the time of the birth of her baby. On the way, she stopped at the Lumbini Pleasure Garden to rest. Under a sweet-scented Sāla tree, on a full-moon day in the month of May, in the year 623 BC, the Prince Siddhattha was born.

Seven days later Queen Mahā Māyā passed away. Her Sister, Mahā Pajāpati Gotami, nursed and took care of the baby Prince. Queen Mahā Māyā was reborn as a male Deva by the name of Mātu Deva



Ravindhi

Putta in the Tusita heaven. Later she passed away from the

Tusita heaven to the Tāvātimsa Heaven to hear the Abhidhamma, the Higher Teachings. The Buddha dispensed the Higher Teachings for three months in the Tāvātimsa heaven to a multitude of Devas presided over by his former mother.

It is said that Prince Siddhattha's mother, Mātu Deva Putta, had appeared before Him and encouraged Him to persevere when he had fainted, weak from the practice of self-mortification. The Ascetic Gotama had practised self-mortification to its fullest degree and reduced His meals to just one mustard seed a day. His flesh and muscle had withered and His skin had clung to His protruding bones. Weak with hunger, the Bodhisatta had fainted momentarily. His former mother had appeared before Him and encouraged Him in His Noble Quest.

The role of the mother of the Buddha is a sacred role that requires great effort. Queen Mahā Māyā aspired to be a mother of a Buddha one hundred thousand world cycles ago at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha, the fifteenth Buddha preceding our Gotama Buddha. She then performed meritorious deeds and kept the precepts for one hundred thousand world cycles to fulfil her aspiration.



CHAPTER 3

Mahā Pajāpati Gotami

Pajāpati Gotami was the younger sister of Queen Mahā Mayā and the second consort of King Suddhodana. She was called Mahā (great) Pajāpati as sages had predicted that she would be the leader of a large following. When her beloved sister passed away seven days after giving birth to Prince Siddhattha, she was desolated. They had been very close as sisters. She decided that she would bring up her sister's baby as her own.

Delegating the care of her own son, Nanda, to nurses, Mahā Pajāpati nursed the new-born babe. Both King Suddhodana and Mahā Pajāpati adored the gentle Prince. Prince Siddhattha grew up in luxury with His stepbrother and stepsister, Nanda and Nandā, Mahā Pajāpati's two children.

When the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu and dispensed the Dhammapāla Jātaka to King Suddhodana, Mahā Pajāpati attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. After King Suddhodana passed away, Mahā Pajāpati decided that she too would enter the Noble Order and lead the holy life under the Buddha. Her son, Nanda, and grandson, little Rāhula, had entered the Order under the great sage. Pajāpati no longer had any desire for worldly pleasures.

The Buddha was visiting Kapilavatthu to settle a dispute that had arisen between the Sākyans and the Koliyas regarding the waters of the Rohini River when Mahā Pajāpati first approached Him with the request to permit women to enter the Noble Order. Without stating the reason the Buddha refused,

saying, "O Gotami, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so". Mahā Pajāpati,



however, did not give up. A second and a third time she requested ordination for women. In each instance the Buddha gave the same reply. The Buddha then proceeded to Vesali to reside at the Mahāvana in the Kutāgāra Hall. The determined Mahā Pajāpati was not discouraged. Cutting off her hair, she donned the yellow robes of a monk, and with a large retinue of Sākyan ladies, walked the 150 miles to Vesali. Covered in dust, her feet swollen and bleeding, she stood outside the hall, weeping. When Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, saw her and heard the cause of her grief, he decided to approach the Buddha on her behalf.

The compassionate Ānanda pleaded on behalf of the ladies. When the Buddha refused, Ānanda asked Him if He felt that women were incapable of reaching spiritual heights and Arahantship. The Buddha replied that women were as capable as men of attaining spiritual development. He then looked back into Mahā Pajāpati's past lives. Seeing that Mahā Pajāpati had made an aspiration many aeons ago to initiate the order of the nuns, the fulfilment of which was to occur during His dispensation, the Buddha relented, granted Ānanda's request, and formed the order of the nuns.

The Buddha did not give the reason for His initial refusal to Mahā Pajāpati. All the Buddhas of the past had had the order of the nuns. The Gotama Buddha would have seen this and realized that the female order was a part of every Buddha's retinue. As such, some speculate that He was testing Pajāpati's determination and resolution, as the holy life for women, especially women of royal birth, would be difficult and entail many hardships. Some speculate that the initial refusal was also because of the society and its treatment of women at that time, and the Buddha's fear for the safety of the female order. In general, it is felt that the initial refusal was to strengthen the determination and resolve of the noble ladies and to prepare them better for the hardships they would have to face.

In India at the time of the Buddha, women were thought to be inferior to men. They did not have much freedom and were often not treated with respect. Women from noble families were carefully secluded and shielded from abuse. The men

ensured the safety of the women. The Buddha's disciples often meditated in forests and walked alone from city to city on lonely roads, preaching the Dhamma. How was He to ensure the safety and protection of the nuns? How was He to ensure they would be treated with respect and fairness? How was He to entrust the safety of the nuns to monks who had taken the vows of celibacy? Would it not then be harder for the monks to be disciplined?

The Buddha dispensed eight extra disciplinary (Vinaya) rules for the nuns, mostly regarding the manner in which they would have to respect and honour the monks who through necessity, would have to protect them. He also prophesied that ordination of nuns would result in the shortening of the time span in which His teachings would remain on Earth.

While some women in the modern world may find it difficult to accept some of these rules, we should place them in the context of the role and position of women at the time of the Buddha, to fully appreciate the bold radical change that the Buddha instigated¹.

The Eight Monastic Regulations applicable to women were:

1. A Bhikkhuni (nun) should always respect a Bhikkhu (monk) even if the monk were junior to her in the order. Among the Bhikkhus the junior monks in the order respected the senior monks just as the junior nuns respected the senior nuns.
2. A Bhikkhuni shall not spend the rainy season in a place where there are no monks. (The attitude prevalent in India towards women at the time of the Buddha necessitated this precaution for the safety of the nuns).
3. Twice a month the Bhikkhuni shall ask the Bhikkhus the time when the monastic discipline (Uposatha) is recited and request for a monk to come to advise and admonish the Bhikkhunis (who have deviated from monastic rules).

¹. Read the life story of Visākhā (32) for a better understanding of the role expected of women.

4. At the termination of the rainy season retreat, the final ceremony shall be held in an assembly of both monks and nuns.
5. Certain offences committed by Bhikkhunis should be dealt with by assemblies of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis. The assembly of Bhikkhunis deals with only minor transgressions and some of a personal nature to women.
6. A novice Bhikkhuni shall receive higher ordination after a training period of two years. There are instances when monks were given higher ordination immediately after ordination.
7. A Bhikkhuni should not rebuke a Bhikkhu under any circumstances.
8. Even though Bhikkhunis cannot admonish Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu can admonish a Bhikkhuni who has transgressed the monastic discipline.

Mahā Pajāpati and her retinue of Sākyan ladies accepted the eight extra discipline rules and received ordination from the Buddha. The Buddha was the first religious teacher to form the order of the Bhikkhunis (nuns). The nuns were then guided under similar monastic rules as the monks. The Buddha appointed two chief female disciples (as he had appointed two chief male disciples) to help with His growing congregation of nuns. Subsequent to this, new rules were added to the discipline as and when required by circumstance. For example, Bhikkhunis were not allowed to meditate and reside on their own in forests after an incident that occurred regarding the Bhikkhuni Uppalavannā².

The Buddha's monastic discipline (five books) for Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis is an exemplary democratic system from which we can still learn. The exceptionally high moral standards of the Sangha and the unsurpassed administrative system the Buddha instituted were well thought out and futuristic. Lord Zetland, a former viceroy of India, writes, "And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the assemblies of the Buddhists in India, two thousand years and more ago, are to be

². Read the life story of Uppalavannā (19).

found the rudiments of our own parliamentary practice of the present day³.”

Before long, Mahā Pajāpati attained Arahantship, as well as intuitive and analytical knowledge. Her retinue of Sākyan ladies too attained Arahantship. Mahā Pajāpati was assigned the foremost place in seniority and experience.

In gratitude, Pajāpati paid reverence to the Buddha and to her beloved sister, Māya, who had brought the Noble Baby into the world, as follows:

*“Buddha, Hero, homage to you,
O best of all beings
Who released me and many other beings from pain.*

*All pain is known: craving as the cause is dried up;
The Noble Eightfold way has been developed,
Cessation has been attained by me.*

*Formerly I was mother, son, father, brother and grandmother;
Not having proper knowledge
I journeyed on (in samsāra) without expiation.*

*I have indeed seen the Blessed One;
This is the last body.
Journeying on from rebirth to rebirth has been eliminated;
There is now no renewed existence (for me).*

*I see the disciples all together,
Putting forth energy, resolute, always with strong effort.
This is homage to the Buddhas.*

*Truly for the sake of many,
Māyā bore Gotama.
She thrust away the mass of pain
Of those struck by sickness and death.”*

Therigāthā 157-162

³. *Legacy of India*, edited by G.T. Garrat. Oxford, 1937.

Mahā Pajāpati aspired to institute the Order of the Nuns at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha. She had observed the Buddha Padumuttara confer a similar title on another nun. Inspired by that nun, she had wanted to hold a similar position at the time of a future Buddha. With this in mind she had given alms to the Padumuttara Buddha and His retinue and made an aspiration. The Buddha, foreseeing that her aspiration would be fulfilled, had prophesied that she would, at the time of the Gotama Buddha, be foremost among the nuns in seniority and experience and would start the Order of the Nuns. From this point onwards, Mahā Pajāpati had performed meritorious deeds and strived with effort to practise the Dhamma.

The next documented birth story takes place at a time when there was no Supreme Buddha. Pajāpati was born to a wealthy family and was attended on by 500 maidservants. She had observed five Pacceka Buddhas⁴ come to the city in search of shelter for the rainy season. Together with her maidservants, she had built five shelters for the Buddhas and furnished them. She had then invited the five Pacceka Buddhas, and together with her servants, had provided them with meals for the entire three months of the rainy season. At the end of the season, together with her maids, she had sewn the Kathina robes to be gifted to the Buddhas. At death Pajāpati and her five hundred maids were reborn in a heavenly realm and enjoyed the pleasures of heavenly bliss for a long time.

Her next documented birth is as Mahā Pajāpati, foster mother and aunt to Prince Siddhattha. With determination and tireless effort she had practised the Dhamma over countless aeons to fulfil the aspiration made one hundred thousand world cycles ago.

The Licchavi Kings of Vesali built a large nunnery for Mahā Pajāpati and her retinue of five hundred Sākyan princesses. Pajāpati was a role model for all the nuns but specifically so to

⁴. Pacceka Buddhas, also known as Silent Buddhas, realize the Truth (Enlightenment) themselves but cannot teach it to others.

other ladies of noble birth. She encouraged and helped them to adjust to the solitary austere life of a nun. She also assisted in the teaching and administration of novice nuns. As she approached her 120th year, Mahā Pajāpati realized that she had not long to live. It was time for her to pay homage for the last time to the Buddha, who had taught her the nectar of the Dhamma and helped her attain Nibbāna. Approaching the Buddha she said:

*“O Lord! I brought up your physical body but
You brought up my spiritual body.
I fed you with breast-milk but
You fed me with the milk of the Dhamma,
To destroy suffering and Samsara.
It is a rare opportunity to see a Buddha.
I would like to view and pay homage
to your lotus-like feet.
Please stretch forward your feet.”*

The Buddha with compassion stretched out His feet, which resembled the pink lotus flower. Falling at His feet and revering the Great Markings that signified an Enlightened Being, Pajāpati worshipped Him and begged forgiveness for any shortcomings she may have had. Then she requested permission to pass away.

The news of the imminent passing away of Pajāpati spread far and wide. Monks and nuns gathered to pay respect and homage to her. Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Nanda, Rāhula, Ānanda, Khemā, Uppalavannā, and many others gathered at Vesali. Ānanda, who was as yet only Sotāpanna, started to weep. Pajāpati then consoled him by reminding him of the great service he had performed to her by speaking on her behalf to the Buddha to form the Order of Nuns. She then gently advised Ānanda not to weep, as it was not appropriate that the monk foremost in retentive memory should weep.

Despite the Buddha’s acknowledgement of the intellectual capabilities of women, there were many men who were not willing to change the views that had been ingrained in them for years. The Buddha called Pajāpati and said, “O Gotami, it is

very rare to see a lady like you (a former queen) attain enlightenment. Perform a miracle to dispel the wrong views of those foolish men who are in doubt with regard to the spiritual potentialities of women.”

Pajāpati then rose in the air and came down and worshipped the Buddha. Three times she paid homage to Him thus, then she disappeared and reappeared before the crowd. Finally accepting permission from the Buddha to attain Parinibbāna, she walked backwards with her eyes on the Buddha towards the nunnery. The Buddha then instructed all to join Him to follow her for her last send-off. Pajāpati entered the nunnery and, seated in the lotus position, entered into deep meditation, attained the Jhanas, and passed away to the Bliss of Parinibbāna.

The Licchavi kings placed the remains of Pajāpati in a golden casket and carried it through the city in a grand procession. The respect that the Buddha had for His foster mother and mothers in general was seen at Mahā Pajāpati’s funeral. The Buddha, who never walked behind anyone, walked behind the carriage that carried her body. In this way, by example, the Buddha showed us that we should respect and honour our mothers for the care and love that they have given us when we were too young to take care of ourselves. Hundreds of monks and nuns followed the carriage to the cremation ground. The casket was then placed on a sandalwood pyre and sprinkled with jasmine and other fragrant oils. The Licchavi kings then lighted the pyre.

The relics of Mahā Pajāpati are said to have turned white like glowing pearls. Ānanda collected the relics and handed them over to the Buddha and later to the Licchavi kings. A Stupa was built by the kings to enshrine Mahā Pajāpati’s relics. Women from all over the world pay respect and homage to Mahā Pajāpati in gratitude for initiating the Order of Nuns.



CHAPTER 4

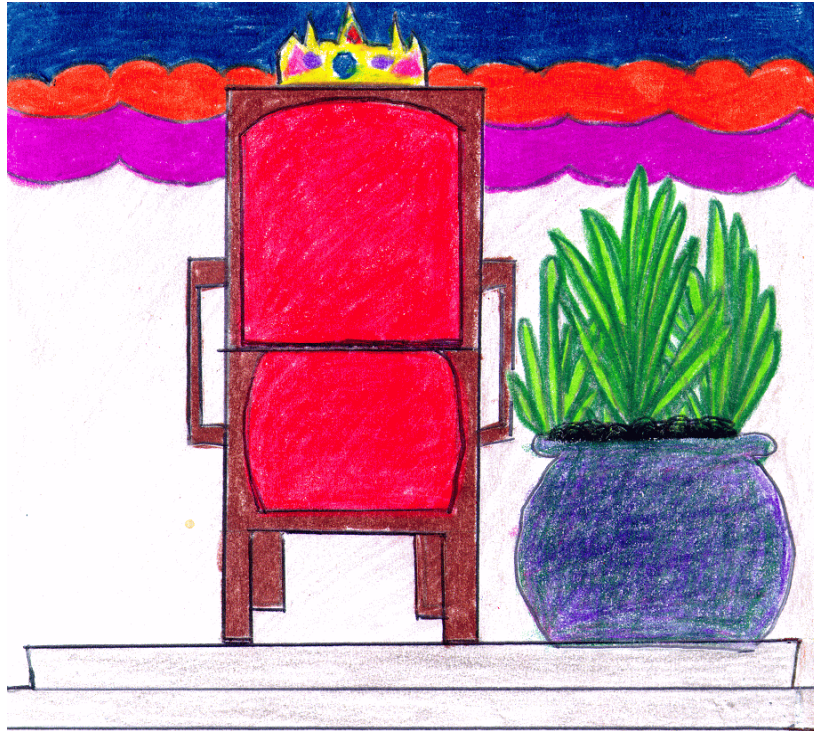
Yasodharā

Yasodharā was the daughter of King Suppabuddha and Queen Pamita. As King Suppabuddha was one of King Suddhodana's younger brothers, she was one of Prince Siddhattha's cousins. Yasodharā was born on the same day as Prince Siddhattha. She was exquisitely beautiful, with golden skin and blue-back hair that cascaded down to her feet.

Prince Siddhattha was sixteen when His parents decided that it was a suitable time for Him to marry. As was the custom at that time, a great celebration was held and princesses from all over the country were brought in procession for the Prince to choose from. None of them attracted His attention. The Prince treated them with gifts but refused them all. The procession was almost finished when Yasodharā came rushing in, to inquire if there were any gifts left for her. The Prince then arose from His throne, and taking the pearl necklace that adorned His person, gently placed it around her neck. Prince Siddhattha chose His cousin, Yasodharā, to be His bride.

At first King Suppabuddha was against the marriage. He knew that the wise men had foretold that Siddhattha would leave the palace and His crown to become a Buddha. He also felt that the gentle, compassionate Prince might not be skilled in warfare, and as such, not be suitable for his daughter. The princess, however, wanted to marry no one else but Siddhattha.

King Suppabuddha, wishing to test Prince Siddhattha, arranged a tournament for Him to display His skills in archery, riding and swordsmanship. Sportsmen from all over the country gathered to



challenge the Prince. Siddhattha, however, was an excellent

sportsman. He excelled in all the events and ousted the best men in the country. King Suppabuddha therefore relented and gave his daughter in marriage to Prince Siddhattha.

The relationship between Yasodharā and Prince Siddhattha was long and deep-rooted. It had started many, many years ago at the time of the Dipankara Buddha. At that time, the Prince (Bodhisatta) was born as an ascetic by the name of Sumedha. After an exceedingly long period of practising the ten virtues, the Bodhisatta Sumedha had finally completed the eight requirements to receive the definite proclamation of Buddhahood from the Dipankara Buddha. Yasodharā, at that time, was born as a noble lady by the name of Sumitra. She saw the Buddha Dipankara give the Bodhisatta eight handfuls of white jasmine flowers and the definite proclamation that He would be a Buddha by the name of Gotama, of the Sākyan caste, in the distant future. Cutting off her hair, she aspired to be His consort and helpmate and to support Him actively in His quest for Buddhahood. This strong aspiration and the meritorious deeds that she performed over a long period of time resulted in her being the Bodhisatta's consort and supporter throughout many births. During this very long period in which the Bodhisatta completed the virtues she actively supported His quest for perfection.

In fact, her dying words reflected this devotion. She referred to the fact that she had been the wife of no other but Him during the entire period and had helped Him to achieve in 100,000 world cycles and four infinite periods what other Buddhas take eight and sixteen infinite periods to achieve.

When the Buddha visited the palace in Kapilavatthu for the first time, all but Princess Yasodharā came to pay homage to Him. She held back, thinking, "Certainly if there is any virtue in me, the Noble Lord Himself will come to my presence." After the meal the Buddha, accompanied by His two male chief disciples, entered her chamber and sat down on the seat prepared for Him. He then said, "Let the king's daughter reverence me as she likes." On seeing the Buddha, Yasodharā came forward quickly, and clasping His ankles, placed her head on His feet and paid reverence to Him as she wished.

Yasodharā's devotion to the Buddha was heralded by her father-in-law, King Suddhodana. He informed the Buddha of her devotion by saying, "When my daughter heard that you had taken to wearing simple yellow robes, she too gave up her jewels and wore yellow robes. When she heard that you had only one meal a day, she too had only one meal a day. When she heard that you slept on low, hard beds, she too gave up the luxurious palace couches and beds. And when she heard that you had given up garlands and perfume, she too gave up garlands and perfume. When her relatives sent messages of young men who wanted to support her she did not even look at a single one."

The Buddha acknowledged this devotion by saying that it was not only in this birth that she had been devoted to him. He then dispensed the Candakinnara Jātaka, where Yasodharā had given her life to save His by jumping in front of a hunter's arrow.

However, her love and devotion are best seen in the poem "The Lion of Men". Pointing out the Buddha and His retinue of monks to their son from the palace balcony, with adoration she described the Buddha and introduced Him to little Rāhula. The following are the words she used to describe the Buddha:

The Lion of Men

*His red, sacred feet are marked with an excellent wheel;
His long heels are decked with characteristic marks;
His feet are adorned with the chowrie (camara) and parasol;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*He is a delicate and noble Sākya Prince;
His body is full of characteristic marks;
Intent on the welfare of the world;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*Like the full moon is His face;
He is dear to gods and men;
His gait is as graceful as that of an elephant of noble breed;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*He is of noble lineage, sprung from the warrior caste;
His feet have been honoured by gods and men;
His mind is well established in morality and concentration;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*Long and prominent is His well-formed nose;
His eyelashes are long like those of a heifer;
His eyes are exceedingly blue and like a rainbow are His blue-
black brows;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*Round and smooth is His well-formed neck;
His jaws are strong like that of a lion;
His body is golden like that of the king of beasts;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*Soft and deep is His sweet voice;
His tongue is as red as vermilion;
His white teeth like pearls are twenty, each row;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*Like the colour of collyrium is His blue-black hair;
Like a polished golden plate is His smooth forehead;
White as the morning star is His beautiful tuft of hair (between
the brows);
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

*Just as the moon, surrounded by the multitude of stars;
Follows the sky's path;
Even so goes the Lord, accompanied by His monks;
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

Yasodharā gave up the household life and entered the order of nuns at the same time as Mahā Pajāpati Gotami . She attained Arahantship and was declared the chief disciple among the nuns who attained supernormal powers (Mahā Abhiññā) to recall infinite eras of the past. Only four of the Buddha's disciples had such powers. In general, the Buddha's disciples could only recall up to 100,000 world cycles. Yasodarā, the Buddha's two chief male disciples and the Elder Bakkula,

however, had supernormal powers and could recall incalculable eras. The nun Yasodharā passed away at the age of 78, prior to the Lord Buddha.



CHAPTER 5

Rāhula

Rāhula was the only son of Prince Siddhattha and Princess Yasodharā. He was named Rāhula by his grandfather because the first word Prince Siddhattha said on hearing about the birth of His son was Rāhu, which means obstacle. An obstacle to His renunciation had arisen. It was on the day that Prince Rāhula was born that Prince Siddhattha made the Great Renunciation. With a heavy heart Prince Siddhattha left His beloved wife and new-born son to seek the path to end suffering for the benefit of mankind and Devas (divine beings).

Prince Rāhula saw His father for the first time at the age of seven. Princess Yasodharā pointed out the majestic Buddha with His retinue of monks to Rāhula from the balcony of the palace. She then described his father, the Buddha, to her son in the Sutta known as “The Lion of Men”. After praising and describing the Buddha, the Princess requested her son to approach his father and ask for his inheritance.

As instructed, Rāhula approached his father and asked for his inheritance. He then looked at his father and said, “Lord, even your shadow is pleasing to me.” Rāhula then followed the Buddha back to the Nigrodhārāma monastery where He was residing. The Buddha thought, “Little Rāhula asks for his inheritance. But worldly treasures and wealth cause suffering. I shall give him the most valuable treasure in the world. I will give him the Dhamma.” Calling Venerable Sāriputta, His chief male disciple, He asked him to ordain little Rāhula.

King Suddhodana was very sad when he heard of the ordination of his beloved grandson. He said: “When the Lord renounced the world it was a cause of great pain to me. It was with deep sadness that I watched Nanda renounce the world. But it is especially painful when little Rāhula renounces. The love of a father to a son is deep and cuts through the skin, flesh, sinew, bone and marrow. Grant, Lord, that Noble Ones will not ordain sons without permission of their parents.” The Buddha readily agreed to this request and made it a discipline (Vinaya) of the Noble Order.

Sāriputta and Moggallāna were little Rāhula’s teachers. While Sāriputta taught Rāhula knowledge of the Dhamma, Moggallāna concentrated on his conduct. Even though Rāhula was only seven when he became a novice monk, he was very eager to accept instruction and was exceptionally cultured and obedient. Each morning he would rise and, taking a handful of sand, throw it up in the air saying, “Today may I receive from my teachers as much advice and instruction as these grains of sand.”

Shortly after Rāhula’s ordination the Buddha taught him the importance of telling the truth. This discourse is known as the Rāhulovāda Sutta. The Buddha placed truth as the highest of all virtues. The seekers of Truth, (those who have as their goal Nibbāna) should not break the precept of Truth. The Buddha explained this in a way a young child would understand by using the following example.

Rāhula had just washed the feet of the Lord and prepared a seat for Him. Taking the vessel which now contained a little bit of water at the bottom, the Buddha showed it to Rāhula and said: “Rāhula, do you see the small (insignificant) amount of water left in this vessel? Similarly, Rāhula, insignificant (of little value) is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies.”

The Buddha then discarded this little bit of water and said; “Rāhula, do you see how I discarded the little bit of water in this vessel? Similarly discarded (set aside and not recognized) is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies.”

He then overturned the pot that had contained the water and said, “Rāhula, do you see how easily I overturn this vessel? Similarly easily overturned (easily influenced and changed) is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies.”

Finally, the Buddha placed the pot upright, showed it to Rāhula and said, “Rāhula, do you see this empty vessel that is void of any water? Similarly empty and void is the character of those who are not ashamed of telling lies.”

The Buddha said that the precept of truth was the most important of all the precepts, as a person who tells lies would very easily then break the other precepts and cover up his misbehaviour by telling lies. A person who always told the truth would not perform an act he would be ashamed to own up to later.

The Buddha also instructed Rāhula on reflecting and thinking before he acted to ensure that his actions were moral and conducive to the well-being of others and himself, by using examples and language a young child would understand.

Showing him a mirror, the Buddha asked Rāhula what a mirror was used for. Rāhula replied that it was for the purpose of reflecting. The Buddha then said: “Similarly, Rāhula, before you say or do anything, reflect. Reflect if this speech or action would be beneficial to others and yourself. If, when you reflect, you feel that it is not beneficial to others and to yourself, then refrain from saying and doing it. If you feel when you reflect that it is for the benefit of yourself and others, that such an action will not bring harm to another, that it is beneficial to others, then and only then should you perform this action. You should then perform this action again and again.”

With this simple but easily understood example the Buddha introduced little Rāhula to mindfulness and the discipline of the mind before action so that his thoughts, speech and actions would be moral and wholesome.



Rāhula was well-known for his obedience and truthfulness. As the son of the Buddha and because of his pleasing nature and young age he was well-liked by all. When Rāhula was eighteen, the Buddha preached to him a very deep discourse on sense desire. He helped Rāhula, who was pleased with his very handsome appearance, understand the dangers of vanity.

The Buddha, accompanied by Rāhula, was seeking alms. They both looked exceedingly handsome, like a majestic royal elephant and his calf, a beautiful swan with his cygnet. Rāhula, seeing the extremely handsome appearance of the Buddha, thought, “I too am like my parent, the Exalted One. Beautiful is the Buddha’s form and mine is similar.”

The Buddha instantly read his thoughts and said, “Rāhula whatever form there is should be looked at as follows: “This is not mine; this am I not; this is not my soul.” Rāhula then inquired if it was only form that should be regarded thus. The Buddha then said that all five aggregates should be regarded

thus. In this way the Buddha introduced the very deep and difficult concept of no permanent self (anatta) to Rāhula.

Rāhula then chose not to seek alms and instead went back and sat in meditation reflecting on the words of the Buddha, trying to understand and penetrate the Truth of the Buddha's words. Shortly after, on hearing the Cula Rāhulavada Sutta, he attained Arahantship. The following words were uttered by Rāhula on attaining Arahantship:

*Being fortunate from both sides,
They call me "Lucky Rāhula",
I was the son of the Buddha,
The son of the Seer of Truth.*

*Blinded by sense desires spread over like a net,
Covered by a cloak of craving,
Bound by the kinsmen of heedlessness,
I was like a fish caught in the mouth of a funnel-net.
That sense desire I have burnt,
The bond of māra (death) I have cut.
Eradicating craving from its root,
Cool am I, peaceful am I.*

*Destroyed are all my corruptions,
There is no more rebirth for me,
An Arahant am I, worthy of offering,
Possessed of threefold knowledge and a seer of the deathless.*

Theragāthā 295-298

Rāhula passed away before the Buddha, Sāriputta and Moggallāna. The Buddha declared that Rāhula was foremost among the monks for his high standard of discipline and obedience. Rāhula, who had entered the order at the tender age of seven, was a role model for the younger members of the Noble Order through his obedience and pleasing nature.



Part II

GREAT MALE DISCIPLES

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CHAPTER 6 & 7

Upatissa (Sāriputta) and Kolita (Moggallāna)

At the time of the Buddha, in a village called Upatissa, there lived a well-known Brāhmin family. The father, Vanganta, and mother, who was named Rupasāri, had a beautiful baby boy whom they named Upatissa, after the village in which they lived. On the very same day, in the village known as Kolita, a Brāhmin woman named Moggali gave birth to a son whom they named Kolita, after the village in which they lived. The two families were well-known to each other and the two boys, Upatissa and Kolita, were best friends.

Both families were wealthy and well respected. As was the custom at the time, each of the young men had a retinue of 500 companions. Upatissa travelled in luxury by palanquin while Kolita travelled by carriage. Both youths led a life of pleasure and luxury.

One day Upatissa and Kolita, together with their companions, decided to attend a festival known as the Hilltop Festival, which included dance, music and drama. At first they enjoyed the festivities and joined in the merrymaking. However, on the third day, reflecting on the fleeting nature of sense pleasures, Upatissa and Kolita decided to give up their wealth and luxuries and take to the holy life of ascetics. At about the same time that Upatissa and Kolita gave up sense pleasures, Prince Siddhattha married Princess Yasodharā.

On hearing of their renunciation some of their companions joined them. Upatissa and Kolita decided to study under the

well-known Ascetic Sanjaya. Before long they had learned everything that Sanjaya

could teach. Realizing that they had not found the truth they were seeking, Upatissa and Kolita decided to seek other teachers and learn their doctrine in search of the Truth. The friends parted after deciding that they would come back and teach the other, if either of them realized the enlightenment they were seeking.

Upatissa was still searching for a teacher when he saw a monk seeking alms for his noonday meal. The serenity and bearing of the monk impressed Upatissa. Thinking that he should not disturb the monk until after his meal, Upatissa followed him back to the forest grove where he dwelled. He then asked the monk under whom he had studied and if he could teach the doctrine of his master. The monk who impressed Upatissa was none other than Assaji, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha. Assaji informed Upatissa that he was himself a new disciple of the fully enlightened Buddha. He said that he would teach the Master's doctrine, but that being new to the doctrine he would have to be brief.

Upatissa requested that he teach whatever he knew. Assaji then said:

*“Of those things that arise from a cause
The Tathāgata (Buddha) has told the cause
And also what their cessation is.
This is the Doctrine of the Buddha.”*

On hearing the first two lines of these four lines the spiritually advanced Upatissa attained the first stage of sainthood, Sottāpanna. After inquiring as to where the Buddha dwelt he then went back to inform Kolita that he had found the Master who would show them the path to deliverance.

The moment that Kolita saw his friend he knew that Upatissa had found the path to deliverance. There was a radiance in his friend that had not been there before. Upatissa confirmed that a Fully Enlightened Being had been born on earth for the benefit of men and Devas. He then explained about His meeting with

Assaji and repeated the four lines he had heard. On hearing the four lines Kolita too attained Sotāpanna.

Kolita was now anxious to meet the Master. However, Upatissa suggested that they should first go back and inform Sanjaya that a Fully Enlightened Being had appeared so that he too could benefit by the Doctrine. The two friends went back and informed Sanjaya.

Sanjaya, however, did not want to go back to being a student. He had a large retinue and was a respected teacher. Blinded by vanity and ignorance he disregarded the pleas of his former students. Sanjaya realized the wisdom of the Buddha and he acknowledged the supremacy of the Buddha. He asked, “Are there more wise men or fools on this earth?” When Upatissa replied that there were more fools than the wise Sanjaya said, “Then let the wise go to the Buddha. Let the fools come to me.”

Upatissa and Kolita left Sanjaya and set off towards Rājagaha, where the Buddha was residing in the bamboo grove. About half of Sanjaya’s pupils decided that they would join Upatissa and Kolita and follow the Doctrine of the Buddha. The text says that Sanjaya was so upset at seeing his retinue dwindle that he was stricken with illness and vomited hot blood.

Upatissa and Kolita approached the Buddha and requested permission to be ordained. The Buddha ordained the two and preached the Dhamma. On hearing the Dhamma all of their retinue attained Arahantship and joined the order. It took Kolita a week with further instruction from the Buddha and Upatissa two weeks of concentrated effort to realize the Truth. After ordination Upatissa was known as Sāriputta and Kolita as Moggallāna.

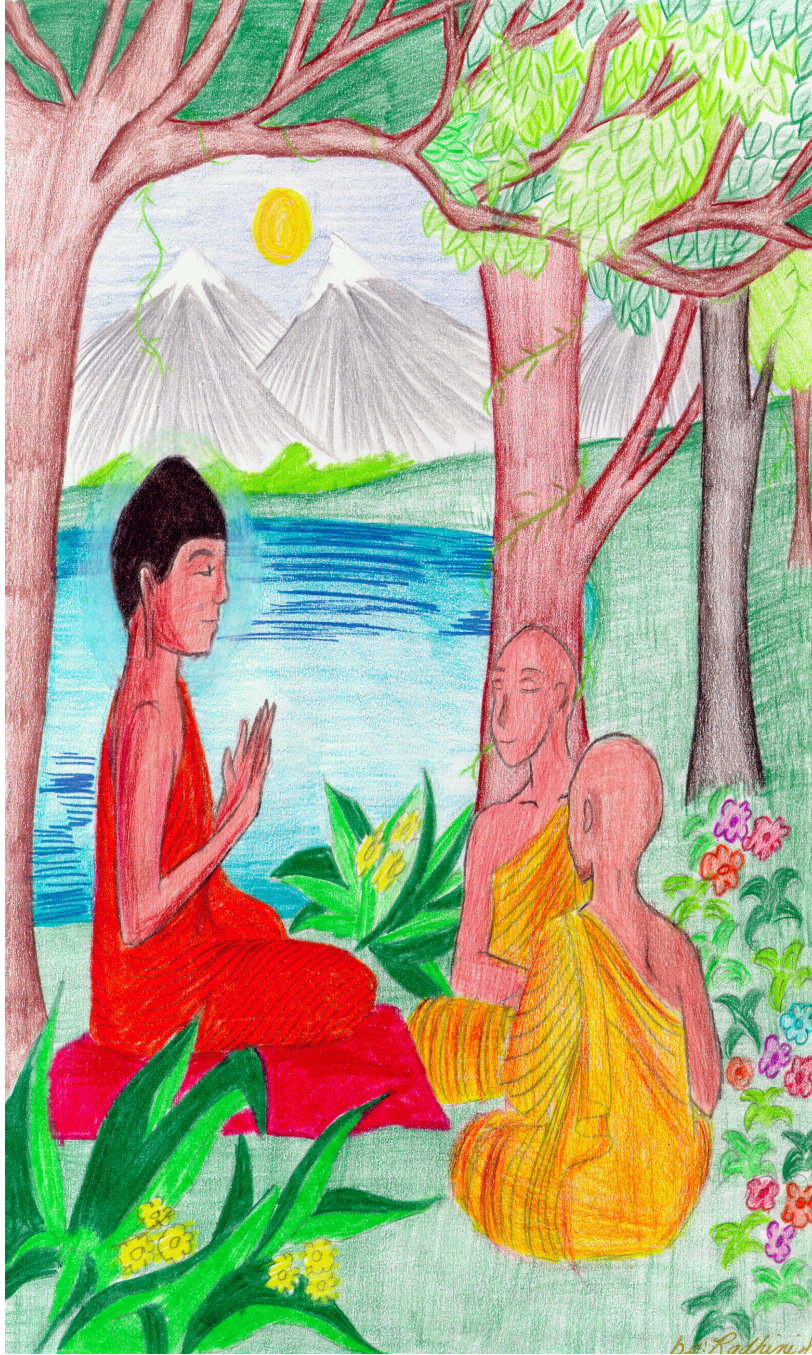
The Buddha then appointed Sāriputta as His first chief disciple and Moggallāna as His second chief disciple. The roles of the chief disciples are very important. They helped the Buddha with His growing congregation and had three main functions to perform as follows:

- To help the Buddha in the consolidation and teaching of the Dhamma for the benefit of men and Divine beings.

- To be a role model for the Sangha (monks and nuns).
- To supervise the training and administration of the Sangha.

When Sāriputta and Moggallāna were appointed as the chief disciples there arose a dispute among the Sangha. Even though the Noble Order was young, the Buddha had many Arahants in His retinue of monks. The five monks who were His first pupils – Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assaji, Yasa and his fifty-four friends, the three Kassapa brothers, and many others who were senior to Sāriputta and Moggallāna. Why had the Buddha not selected one of them? The Buddha then explained that He had not selected His chief disciples. All that He had done was to appoint the persons who had many aeons ago aspired to these positions and worked tirelessly, performing meritorious deeds, to fulfil their aspiration. The fruits of their labour were being fulfilled under His order.

And so we go back 100,000 world cycles and one incalculable period in time to the era of the Buddha Anomadassi, the 18th Buddha prior to the Gotama Buddha. Sāriputta at that time was known as Sarada, and Moggallāna as Sirivaddhana. Sarada, unsatisfied with his luxurious life of wealth and pleasures, had adopted the life of an ascetic. Inspired by the radiance of the Anomadassi Buddha, he had prepared a canopy of fragrant flowers which he held above the Buddha to form a fragrant arbour. The Anomadassi Buddha, accompanied by His chief disciples, Nisabha and Anoma, attained a higher meditative stage, which He retained for a week. Sarada was so inspired by the Anomadassi Buddha that he remained thus, holding the fragrant canopy, so as not to disturb the Buddha. The Buddha Anomadassi, seeing the merit of Sarada and desiring to inspire Sarada to further heights, instructed Nisabha to dispense the Dhamma to Sarada and the devotees who were present. So inspiring were the Dhamma and the deportment of the chief disciple that Sarada paid homage to the Buddha Anomadassi and aspired to be the first chief disciple of a future Buddha. The Buddha Anomadassi looked into the future and seeing that his aspiration would be fulfilled, prophesied that 100,000 world cycles and one infinite period into the future, Sarada would be the first chief disciple, by the name of Sāriputta, of the Gotama Buddha.



Sarada then urged his friend to perform meritorious deeds and to aspire to be the second chief disciple of the Gotama Buddha.

Inspired by his friend, Sirivaddhana built an alms hall, provided meals and robes to the Anomadassi Buddha and His retinue of 100,000 monks and aspired to be the second chief disciple of the Gotama Buddha. The Anomadassi Buddha, seeing that Sirivaddhana's aspiration would be fulfilled, prophesied that he would be the second chief disciple, named Moggallāna, of the Gotama Buddha.

The knowledge, wisdom and abilities of the Buddha were incomparable. There was no one in the Sangha who could take His place or substitute for the Teacher. However, the combined qualities of the two chief disciples complemented those of the Buddha. Sāriputta, who was foremost in wisdom, was steady and focussed his energies on leading as many persons as possible to the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna (also known as stream enterer). This was because once they had entered this stage they would move forward and reach the other stages within seven more births. There was no longer the danger of their falling back or obtaining birth in an unhappy realm. Sāriputta felt that he should place as many persons as possible in the Path. Moggallāna, the more aggressive of the two, was foremost in psychic powers. Feeling that even one more rebirth was one too many, Moggallāna concentrated his efforts on taking the devotees from Sotāpanna to Arahantship. The two friends continued to work together as one, each drawing on the strengths of the other, for the betterment of men and gods.

The Buddha had the deepest respect and regard for His chief disciples and used them as an example for His monks. He encouraged His monks to associate with and emulate the chief disciples by saying:

*“Associate, O monks, Sāriputta and Moggallāna
and keep company with them.
They are wise bhikkhus
and helpers of their fellow monks...”*



CHAPTER 6

Sāriputta

Sāriputta was the first (right) chief disciple of the Buddha and foremost in wisdom. His special task was the detailed analysis and systematisation of the doctrine. Because of his deep insight of the ultimate Truth he was responsible for drawing out the subtle implications of the Dhamma and for explaining the meaning of complex teachings.

In addition to his wisdom, Sāriputta was well-known for his patience, compassion, humility and helpfulness to others. Not only did he help the community and the monks in the Dhamma, but he also provided material help and comfort. When the monks left for their alms round early in the morning Sāriputta did not join them. Instead, he stayed in the monastery and made sure that everything was in order. If one of the novice monks had forgotten to sweep out a room or if any item was disarranged Sāriputta put it in place and swept the premises. He wanted to ensure that the monastery should at all times be in order so that visiting devotees would not have a negative impression of the Order.

Sāriputta's Caring

He then visited the sick hall and provided comfort and medicine for the monks who were sick. Tending a sick monk named Tissa that everyone had rejected, the Buddha had said, "Those that tend the sick tend me (follow my teachings)." Sāriputta, reminding the monks of this, encouraged the novice monks to help with the caring and comforting of the sick. If any of them required medicine that was not available on site, he

arranged for it to be obtained. It was only after such duties were taken care of that Sāriputta went on his alms round.

There are many documented instances of Sāriputta's ministering to the sick. His instruction and comfort to Anāthapindika are noteworthy. Sāriputta helped Anāthapindika on two occasions. The first was when he was sick and in excruciating pain. Sāriputta had reminded Anāthapindika that he was a Sotāpanna and as such on the path to enlightenment. He could not fall away from the Dhamma or obtain rebirth in one of the unhappy plains. These words relaxed Anāthapindika's mind and gave him great happiness. The excruciating pain disappeared. So grateful was Anāthapindika to Sāriputta that he offered him the rich meal that had been prepared by his servants to tempt him to eat.

The second instance was at Anāthapindika's deathbed. Anāthapindika, who had a lot of confidence in Sāriputta and respect for him had requested his presence 'out of compassion for him'. Sāriputta, accompanied by Ānanda, had come and given an inspiring sermon on non-attachment. Anāthapindika was moved to tears by the profound discourse, the likes of which he had never heard before. Shortly after, Anāthapindika died and was reborn in the Tusita heaven as a Deva. That night he came in splendour to Jetavana to praise the glory of the chief disciple. Saluting the Buddha, he said:

*“Sāriputta truly is endowed with wisdom
With virtue and with inner peace,
Even a monk that has gone beyond
At best can only equal him.”*

The next morning the Buddha told His monks of His visitor and what he had said, without identifying the Deva. Ānanda immediately identified Anāthapindika correctly by saying that the Deva must be Anāthapindika, reborn as a Deva, as he had great respect for and confidence in Sāriputta.

Sāriputta's Humility

Sāriputta's humility is also documented in the text. When travelling with the Buddha he did not feel that as the first chief disciple his place should be next to the Buddha. Instead, he trailed behind, helping the sick and infirm monks who usually lagged behind. In fact, because of his immense compassion and caring, on one such instance Sāriputta was the last to arrive. As all the good accommodation had been taken, Sāriputta slept in a tent made of robes. When this was brought to the Buddha's attention He said that accommodation should be arranged based on seniority in the order and dispensed the Tittira Jātaka, where in a previous birth the Buddha and His chief disciples had similarly decided that the three of them would pay homage and obeisance to the most senior member.

On another occasion a seven-year-old novice monk brought to Sāriputta's attention the fact that his inner robe dragged below his outer robe. Moving aside, Sāriputta adjusted his robe, then saluted the young monk and asked, "Now is it correct, teacher?" The Milindapanha documents Sāriputta's account of this incident as follows:

*"If one who has gone forth this day, at age seven
Should teach me, I accept it with lowered head;
At sight of him I show my zeal and respect:
May I always set him in the teacher's place."*

Sāriputta's respect for his teacher Assaji who first taught him the Dhamma is an example that all should follow. Each night before sleeping Sāriputta would pay obeisance to the Buddha. Then he would look around, prostrate himself and worship a direction. Observing this, the monks informed the Buddha that Sāriputta had taken to worshipping the different directions (north, south, east and west). The Buddha corrected their assumption by saying that each night Sāriputta looked with his divine eye to see in which direction his first teacher, Assaji, was residing. Then, after paying obeisance to him, he slept placing his head in that direction, careful to ensure that his feet were not in the direction in which Assaji was residing.

The honouring of one's teachers is an integral part of the Buddha's teaching. The Nāvā Sutta instructs that one should honour one's teacher, especially those who teach the nectar of the Dhamma. The Sutta starts as follows:

*“As the Devas pay devout homage to Indra⁵,
So should one revere the person
Through whom one has learnt the Dhamma.”*

Sāriputta's Patience

Sāriputta's patience and forbearance are also legendary. A group of men were praising the noble qualities of the elder when a young Brāhmin challenged them saying that the reason Sāriputta had never shown anger was because he had never been provoked. To prove that Sāriputta, like others, would resort to anger, he walked up behind the elder and dealt him a resounding blow. Sāriputta said 'What was that?' and then, without even turning around to find out who had hit him, continued walking. The Brāhmin was overcome with guilt and shame at his conduct. Falling on his knees he begged pardon and told Sāriputta how he had hit him to provoke anger. Sāriputta then forgave the Brāhmin. The Brāhmin, not satisfied with a verbal pardon, asked Sāriputta to come to his home for the noonday meal to show that he bore no malice towards him. Sāriputta accepted the invitation.

After the meal, as Sāriputta was leaving, he saw that a mob of angry supporters had gathered with sticks and stones to punish the Brāhmin. They had witnessed the Brāhmin's treatment of the elder whom they loved and respected. Sāriputta asked them what the commotion was about. When informed he asked, 'Whom did the Brāhmin strike, you or me?' On being told that it was the Elder whom the Brāhmin had struck he dispersed the angry crowd by saying, "I have pardoned him. What cause is there for anger when I whom he struck feel none."

⁵. Sakka, the ruler of the Tāvātimsa heaven, said to be well-respected and unconquerable.

Sāriputta's caring, compassion and humility won him many friends. He was the chief disciple of the Buddha, second in wisdom to the Buddha. But he was humble, caring and compassionate. He also did not in any way use his position for special treatment. In addition to his close friendship with Moggallāna, his childhood friend, he had a close relationship with Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant.

Sāriputta, who felt that as chief disciple he should be attending to the needs of the Buddha, was deeply grateful for the respect, care and attention that Ānanda lavished on the Buddha. In turn, Ānanda was deeply respectful of the chief disciple of the Buddha who helped to administer and train the Buddha's large following. When Ānanda gave ordination to novice monks he took them to Sāriputta for higher ordination. Similarly when Sāriputta gave ordination to novice monks he took them to Ānanda for higher ordination. In this way the two great elders shared a large congregation of monks.

Ānanda also, with the Buddha's permission, often kept choice robes that he received for Sāriputta. In the same manner, Sāriputta passed on to Ānanda choice offerings that had been made to him. Once Ānanda received a very expensive robe from a wealthy Brāhmin and, with the Buddha's permission, kept it for ten days for Sāriputta's return. The other monks commented on this deep friendship, saying, "We can understand Ānanda, who has not as yet attained Arahantship, feeling such deep affection for Sāriputta, but how is it that Sāriputta, who is free of taints, should reciprocate?" The answer, of course, was that Sāriputta's attachment was not a worldly attachment but a love and respect for Ānanda's virtues. It is also because Arahants have not eradicated samsaric virtues (vāsanā gune). It is only the Buddha who has eradicated vāsanā gune.

Sāriputta must have been a stimulating companion for he was sought after by many. What attracted people to him was his deep caring for others, his enormous patience and his exemplary behaviour. When Sāriputta entered the meditative stage on the void, even the Devas came to pay homage to him. The following is Mahā Kassapa's praise of the elder:



*“These many Devas, powerful and glorious,
Ten thousand (Devas), from Brahma’s company,
Stand with joined hands worshipping him,
Sāriputta, wise marshal of the Dhamma,
The great meditator in concentration.
“Homage to you, O thoroughbred man,
Homage to you, O supreme man...”*

Theragāthā 1082-1084

Despite the fact that he had a large following and was well-respected, Sāriputta had difficulties convincing his mother, Rupasāri, of the Truth, as she had been taught from birth the doctrine of the Brāhmins. Sāriputta had three brothers, Cunda, Upasena and Revata, and three sisters, Cāla, Upacāla and Sisupacāla. All six took ordination under the Buddha and attained Arahantship. Cunda was in later years Sāriputta’s attendant. Despite the fact that Rupasāri had such distinguished children in the Order, she herself was a non-believer, deeply set in Brāhmin rites and rituals. In fact, she had not wanted her youngest son, Revata, to be ordained, and had planned a marriage for him at a very young age to prevent him from entering the order. However, on his wedding day, when Revata viewed the very old grandmother of his bride-to-be, he became disillusioned and, realizing the impermanence of all things, ran away from the wedding to the monastery to be ordained. His three sisters married, but gave up the household life and became nuns. Their children too entered the order.

None of her children or grandchildren, however, could influence Rupasāri. When Sāriputta visited the city of his birth with a large gathering of monks, he came to his mother’s house for alms. His mother, whilst offering them food, insulted him in front of all the monks by berating him. She said, “O you, eater of others’ leavings. When you fail to get food you go from house to house among strangers, licking the leavings from the back of their ladles. And so it was for this that you gave up eighty crores of wealth. You have ruined me. Now go on and eat.” She then went on to berate the monks for having her younger son as an attendant by saying, “So you are the men who have made my younger son your page boy”. Sāriputta,

however, did not say a word. He took his food in silence and returned to the monastery.

Rāhula, who had been among the retinue of monks, related this incident to the Buddha. Thereupon the Buddha praised Sāriputta in front of the assembly of monks by saying:

*“He that is free from anger,
Who performs his duties faithfully,
He that guards the precepts and is free from lust,
He that has subdued himself,
He that wears his last body -
He it is I call a Brāhmin (Arahanth).*

Dhammapada 400

We can all learn from Sāriputta’s great patience, forbearance and humility. The Buddha has instructed us on the respect we should have for our mothers. Sāriputta’s exemplary behaviour is one that we should all follow.

Sāriputta’s Enlightenment

Sāriputta attained supreme knowledge whilst listening to a discourse that the Buddha was addressing to Dighanakha, Sāriputta’s nephew. The Buddha was teaching the comprehension of feeling and began by explaining the nature of the body. He then asked Dighanakha to contemplate the body so that desire and concern for the body should be abandoned. He then went on to explain the impermanence of all feeling and the doctrine of dependent arising. Sāriputta, who was fanning the Buddha, listened to the discourse and describes his attainment of Arahanthship as follows:

*“The Blessed One, The Buddha, The One with Vision,
Was teaching the Dhamma to another.
Whilst the Dhamma was being taught,
I lent an ear keen on the goal.
That listening of mine was not in vain,
For I am released free from cankers.”*

Theragāthā 995-996

The Buddha repeatedly praised and reinforced Sāriputta's administration and handling of the monks. There is, however, one occasion on which the Buddha mildly admonished Sāriputta. Sāriputta had taught the Brāhmin Dhānanjāni at his deathbed and ensured rebirth in a Brahma realm by teaching him about the four Brahma Vihara: Mettā (loving-kindness), Karunā (compassion), Muditā (sympathetic joy) and Upekkhā (equanimity). The Buddha questioned him as to why he had not taught Dhānanjāni further and helped him to destroy all cankers and attain Nibbāna. Sāriputta, unlike the Buddha, did not have the ability to know the spiritual capabilities of a person. As Dhānanjāni was a Brāhmin he had ensured that his goal, which was birth in the Brahma realm, was met. The Buddha explained that as a result Dhānanjāni would need to obtain birth again in the human realm to achieve Arahantship. This shows that rebirth, even in a Brahma realm, is not desirable, as one who has not attained Sotāpanna could in a subsequent birth perform an unwholesome deed that could lead to rebirth in an unhappy realm. The Buddha had seen that Dhānanjāni would have been capable of attaining Arahantship with some well-directed instruction.

Sāriputta's Last Days

When Sāriputta's life was nearing its end he decided that it was time to convince his mother of the Truth and place her on the Buddha's Path. Sāriputta knew that he had to first open her mind so that she would be receptive to the Buddha's Teaching. He also knew that the only way that could be done was by shaking the confidence she had in Mahā Brahma. Knowing that the Brahmas, including Mahā Brahma, had great regard for him, he decided to go to his birthplace to pass away on the same bed in which he had been born. But first he had to take leave of the Buddha. With his retinue of monks he visited the Buddha and saluted Him respectfully. He then said:

*“Lord of the world, O Great Sage,
I soon shall be released from life,
Going and coming shall be no more.
This is the last time I worship you,
Short is the life that now remains in me
But seven days from now I shall lay
This body down, throwing the burden off.
Grant it, O Master! Give permission, Lord!
At last the time has come for my Nibbāna
Now I have relinquished the will to live.*

The Buddha then asked Sāriputta where he would attain final Nibbāna. Sāriputta replied that it would be in the Magadha country, in the village named Nālaka (Upatissa). The Buddha then asked Sāriputta to dispense the Dhamma to his younger and elder brothers, as they would no longer have the opportunity to see a Bhikkhu like him.

The great elder then gave a discourse in which he displayed all his wondrous powers. Rising to the loftiest height of truth descending to mundane truth, rising again and again, he expounded the Dhamma directly and with similes.

He then worshipped the feet of the Buddha, embraced them and said: “So that I may worship at these feet I fulfilled the perfections throughout an incalculable period and one hundred thousand world cycles. My heart’s wish has found fulfilment. From now on there will be no more contact and feeling. Soon I will enter the City of Nibbāna the unaging, peaceful, blissful and secure, which has been attained by many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. If any deed or words of mine did not please you, O Lord, may the Blessed One forgive me. It is now time for me to go.”

The Buddha then forgave Sāriputta by saying, “There is nothing either by deed or words that I have to reproach you, Sāriputta, for you are learned, of great wisdom, of broad and bright wisdom, of quick, keen and penetrative wisdom.”

Immediately after the Buddha gave permission for Sāriputta to attain Nibbāna the great Earth shook and the skies tore open

with a deluge of rain as if the very heavens were crying for the passing away of the great elder. The Buddha then rose and went to His perfumed chamber. Three times Sāriputta circumambulated the chamber and paid reverence, and said: “It was one incalculable period and one hundred thousand world cycles ago that I prostrated myself at the feet of the Anomadassi Buddha and made the aspiration to see you. This aspiration has now been fulfilled and I have seen you. At the first meeting it was my first sighting of you. This is my last. There will be none in the future.” And with raised hands joined in salutation, he revered the Buddha and walked backwards until the Blessed One was out of sight.

The Blessed One then addressed the Bhikkhus who surrounded Him and asked them to accompany Sāriputta on his last journey. At His words all four assemblies at Jetavana left the Master alone and accompanied the great elder. The citizens of Sāvatti also joined in with incense and fragrant flowers. A multitude of weeping and lamenting devotees followed the elder. Sāriputta then addressed the devotees and reminded them of the impermanence of all things. “Have I not, he said, taught you of the impermanence of all near and dear to us”? He then asked everyone to go back to Sāvatti, as the Master was alone and should not be left unattended.

Accompanied by a retinue of five hundred monks whom he himself had ordained, Sāriputta set off for his birthplace. It took them a week to travel to Nālaka and on the way he spent one night in each of the different cities, teaching the Dhamma with compassion to the devotees for the last time. Upon entering the city of his birth he sent a message through his nephew informing his mother that he and his retinue would be staying with her for a day, and asking her to prepare his birth chamber and residence for his 500 monks.

He then walked slowly to his childhood home. Rupasāri was perplexed at her son’s appearance. “I wonder,” she thought, “if he has realized the error of his thinking in leaving all his wealth. Perhaps in his old age he has grown wiser and has come back to reclaim his wealth.” She then went about preparing for her son and his retinue.

Sāriputta approached his mother's house and entered the bedchamber where he had been born. But he was now in great pain and very sick with dysentery. He lay down to rest whilst his brother, the novice Cunda, attended to his needs.

The four leading Devas of the Cātumahārājika Heaven, seeing that the Marshall of the Dhamma was about to pass away, descended in all Their radiance to pay obeisance to the Venerable elder. Shortly after, Sakka, the king of the Tavatimsa Heaven, illuminated the whole area and descended to earth, and kneeling before the elder, paid obeisance to the Venerable One. Finally, Mahā Bahama, in His full radiance, descended to earth to pay His last respects and catch a last glimpse of the elder.

Rupasāri approached her son and questioned him on his visitors. "Who were the four radiant beings", she asked, "who paid obeisance to you?" Sāriputta replied, "The four great divine kings, upasika." "Are you then greater than them?" asked his mother. "They are like temple attendants", replied Sāriputta. "Ever since our Master took rebirth they have been standing guard over Him, swords in hand."

His mother then questioned him on his next visitor who surpassed the four kings in radiance. "That", said Sāriputta, "is Sakka, the king of the Devas." "Are you then greater than the king of the Devas, dear?" asked his mother. "He is like a novice who carries a Bhikkhu's belongings," replied Sāriputta. "When our Master returns from the Tāvātimsa Heaven, Sakka takes His bowl and extra robe and descends to earth with Him."

"And when Sakka had gone" asked his mother, "who was it who descended to your room, filling the room with his radiance?" "That," replied Sāriputta, "is your Mahā Brahma. The lord and master to whom you have been paying obeisance." "Are you then greater than my lord Mahā Brahma?" asked his mother.

"Yes, Upasika," replied Sāriputta, "on the day our master was born it is said that Mahā Brahma received the Great Being in a golden net."

Upon hearing this the Brāhmin woman thought, “How great must be the power and goodness of my son’s Master,” and she was suffused with happiness, joy and confidence in the Exalted One.

Sāriputta, seeing that his mother was now ready to receive the teachings of the Buddha, explained to her the Dhamma based on the virtues of the Buddha. At the end of the discourse his mother attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. Enjoying the bliss of Sotāpanna, she then asked him why during all these years he had not bestowed the ambrosia of the knowledge of the deathless on her. Sāriputta realized that his end was imminent. Seeing that his mother was now on the Path to Emancipation, and that she would not fall away from the Path, Sāriputta requested the presence of his retinue of monks.

When the monks had assembled he asked Cunda to help him to a sitting position. And addressing the monks, he said, “For forty-five years I have lived and travelled with you. If by deed or word I caused you pain, forgive me, brethren.”

And the monks replied that he had never given any cause for displeasure or pain and in turn asked Sāriputta for forgiveness for any wrong they may have done. Then the elder, pulling his robe around him, lay on his right side and entered into the nine successive attainments of meditation in forward and reverse order, then passed through the four absorptions, and just as the crest of the sun was rising, at early dawn passed away to final Nibbāna.

Next morning when his mother found that he had passed away she lamented at the missed opportunity to perform meritorious deeds for her son. And thus lamenting and crying at her own former folly spent the morning, for even as a Sotāpanna she still had not eradicated all attachments.

After a week of ceremonies and homage a funeral pyre was built of sandalwood with rich arches of gold to cremate the elder. News of the elder’s death spread and people from all over came to pay homage and their last respects to the Marshal

of the Dhamma. Throughout the night the devotees listened to discourses of the Dhamma until finally Venerable Anuruddha extinguished the glowing embers with scented water and, using a filter cloth, sifted the relics of the elder.

When Cunda, Sāriputta's attendant, informed Ānanda that Sāriputta had passed away and handed him his master's robe and bowl, Ānanda became weak and pale with grief over his friend. He addressed the Buddha and said, "Lord, the novice Cunda has told me that Sāriputta has passed away. Then, Lord, my own body became weak as a creeper; everything around me became dim and things were no longer clear to me..."

The Buddha then questioned Ānanda as to how this could be, as Sāriputta had not taken any of Ānanda's knowledge or virtue with him when he passed away. The Buddha then reminded Ānanda of impermanence and of the fact that He had taught him that all near and dear to us would eventually pass away.

Sāriputta's Contribution

Sāriputta's enormous contribution as the Marshal of the Dhamma can be understood by his description of his attainment of the supreme knowledge and the Buddha's praise of the elder. Sāriputta said:

"It was half a month after my ordination, friends, that I realized in all their parts and details,

the analytical knowledge of meaning,
the analytical knowledge of the doctrine,
the analytical knowledge of language,
the analytical knowledge of perspicacity.

These I expound in many ways, teach them and make them known, establish and reveal them, explain and clarify them. If anyone has any doubt or uncertainty, he may ask me and I shall explain the matter."

Anguttara Nikāya

Sāriputta, with this fourfold analytical knowledge, not only excelled in understanding the Dhamma, but also in teaching it so that others could understand. Because of his excellence in the Anupādā Sutta, the Buddha declared him to be a true spiritual son and His chief assistant in “turning the Wheel of the Dhamma”. The Buddha said:

“If one could ever say rightly of one that he has come to mastery and perfection in noble virtue, noble concentration, noble wisdom and noble liberation, it is of Sāriputta that one could thus rightly declare.

If one could ever say rightly of one that he is the Blessed One’s true son, born of His speech, born of the Dhamma, formed of the Dhamma, heir to the Dhamma (not heir to worldly benefit), it is of Sāriputta that one could thus rightly declare.

After me, O monks, Sāriputta rightly turns the Supreme Wheel of the Dhamma even as I have turned it.”

There are many discourses and books attributed to Sāriputta which form a comprehensive body of the Buddha’s teaching. Sāriputta understood in a unique way how to organize and present the rich and deep Dhamma in a lucid manner that was intellectually stimulating and inspirational. He was also responsible for the codification of the Abhidhamma that the Buddha taught in the Tāvātimsa heaven to the Devas. Each day the Buddha would come back to earth to partake of His alms food and then would transmit this knowledge to Sāriputta. Thus the giving of the method of the Higher Teachings was to the chief disciple who was endowed with the analytical knowledge, who then passed it on to the monks.

The Buddha’s high regard for Sāriputta is seen again and again. In one instance the Buddha compared Sāriputta to a crown prince as follows:

“If he is endowed with five qualities, O monks, the eldest son of a world monarch righteously turns the wheel of sovereignty that has been turned by his father. And the wheel of sovereignty cannot be overturned by any hostile human being. What are the five qualities? The eldest son of a world monarch knows what

is beneficial, knows the law, knows the right measure, knows the right time and knows the society (with which he has to deal).

Similarly, O monks, is Sāriputta endowed with five qualities and rightly turns the Supreme Wheel of the Dhamma, even as I have turned it. And the Wheel of the Dhamma cannot be overturned by ascetics or priests, by deities or Brahma, nor by anyone else in the world. What are those five qualities? Sāriputta, O monks, knows what is beneficial, knows the Dhamma, knows the right measures, knows the right time and knows the assembly (he is to address).”

Sāriputta encouraged those in the Noble Order by his wisdom and gentle ways. He said:

*“Of restrained conduct, full of mindfulness,
Like a mindful one meditating with restrained intentions,
Vigilant, delighting in inward things,
With self well-concentrated,
Alone, content, him they call a Bhikkhu.*

*Whether eating moist or dried food,
He should be satisfied;
A Bhikkhu should wander with unfilled belly,
Eating in moderation, mindful.*

*Leaving four or five mouthfuls,
He should drink water;
This is sufficient for the abiding in comfort
Of a resolute Bhikkhu.*

*If he covers himself in the proper robe,
Which is for this purpose,
This is sufficient for the abiding in comfort
Of a resolute Bhikkhu.*

*Just as a rocky mountain is unmoving,
Well-founded, so a Bhikkhu,
Like a mountain does not tremble,*

After the annihilation of delusion.

*To a man who is without sin,
Always seeking purity,
A hair's tip measure of evil seems
As if the size of a cloud.*

*I do not long for death,
I do not long for life,
I shall lay down this body attentive
And mindful.
As a frontier city is guarded inside and out
So you should guard yourselves.
Let not the opportunity pass you by,
For those who have missed the opportunity
Grieve when consigned to hell.*

*Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation,
Not conceited, he shakes off evil characteristics,
As the wind shakes off the leaves of a tree.*

*Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation,
Not conceited, he plucks off evil characteristics
As the wind plucks off the leaves of a tree.*

*Calm, without grief, settled and undisturbed,
Of good virtue, He should put
An end to pain.*

*Desire for sensual pleasure,
Malevolence, sloth and torpor,
Conceit and uncertainty,
These are the five defilements of the mind for a Bhikkhu.*

*Meditating, persevering,
Having subtle insight into views,
Having delight in the annihilation of grasping,
Him they call a good man.*

*Even the great sea, the earth, a mountain and wind,
Are not applicable in simile,*

To the Teacher's excellent release.

*Keeping the wheel rolling,
Having great knowledge,
Concentrated, being like earth, water, fire,
The elder is not attached,
Is not opposed.*

*Having attained the perfection of wisdom,
Having great discernment and great thought,
Not dull (but) as though dull,
He always wanders, quenched.*

*The Teacher has been waited on by me,
The Buddha's Teaching has been done,
The heavy load has been put down,
That which leads to renewed existence has been rooted out.*

*Theragāthā 981-984, 1000-1002, 1005-1008, 1010,
1012-1016*

Sāriputta's great reputation long survived him. His great work still remains today, preserved and enshrined in some of the oldest books of Buddhism alongside the words of the Buddha.



CHAPTER 7

Moggallāna

Moggallāna, who was the second (left) chief disciple of the Buddha, was instrumental in preserving, cultivating and enriching the Dhamma for future generations. He was also foremost in supernormal powers. Before long he came to be known as Mahā Moggallāna or “Moggallāna the great”, so as to distinguish him from other contemporaries with the same name.

There were many monks who were highly skilled in various supernormal powers. But they each mastered only one or two of the powers. Anuruddha and the nun Sakulā possessed supernormal vision or the divine eye. The monk Sobhita and the nun Bhadda Kapilani could recollect many past births. Cula Panthaka was skilled in astral travel, while the monk Sāgala mastered the element of fire and Pilindi Vaccha excelled in communications with divine beings. Mahā Moggallāna, however, mastered all of these supernormal powers in a comprehensive manner and as such surpassed in excellence these other monks and nuns. His powers were also stronger than those possessed by the nun Uppalavannā, who was foremost among the nuns in supernormal powers.

In general we limit our knowledge to that which we can experience with the five senses. Since we are limited by the capabilities of our sense organs, we tend to perceive our limited experiences as absolute. Therefore, with confidence we look into an empty room and say that there is nothing in the room though in fact the room is teeming with life forms so small that they cannot be seen with the naked eye. Similarly, there are

many sounds that we cannot hear and smells we cannot detect. In fact, it is proven that the hearing and olfactory senses of a dog are far superior to those of a human being. Despite this fact, we restrict our experience and view the truth that is perceived as absolute due to the limitations of our sense organs. The universe as experienced by the wise is much larger, as they can tap into other sources of energy with their developed mind.

Through development of the four ways of power (iddhipāda), Mahā Moggallāna was capable of a much wider experience in space and time. His knowledge transcended the limitations and boundaries of the normal mind. By developing his mind over an infinite period of time, Moggallāna achieved supernormal powers that may seem like make-believe to modern man. Some of his powers and feats have been carefully documented and preserved to help future generations understand the full potential of the mind. There were six types of supernormal powers that Mahā Moggallāna had developed. They have been outlined briefly with some examples as documented in the texts.

1. Penetration of others' minds and thought reading.

Moggallāna, like the Buddha, had the ability to penetrate and read the minds of others and often helped the Buddha by using this trait. One night the Buddha sat in silence in front of an assembly of monks, observing each of the monks gathered in turn, without uttering a word. When morning dawned the Buddha addressed the assembly and said that this assembly was impure, as there was among them a monk who was corrupt.

Moggallāna surveyed the minds of each of the monks gathered and saw that one of the monks was corrupt. Approaching him he asked the monk to leave. The monk refused. Three times Moggallāna requested that the monk leave the assembly. Each time the monk refused. Moggallāna then led him out of the assembly and closed the door. Moggallāna then asked the Buddha to recite the rules of monastic discipline (Pātimokkha) as the assembly was now pure. The



Buddha, observing that the assembly was pure, addressed the

monks with a sermon on the Monastic Discipline.

The text also refers to an incident where Moggallāna had penetrated the minds of 500 of his disciples and determined that they were all Arahants. The monk Vangisa, who was well-known for his poetic language, had immediately realized what had happened and praised Moggallāna's ability to the Buddha as follows:

*“While the sage is seated on the mountain slope,
Gone beyond to the far shore of suffering,
His disciples sit in attendance on him,
Triple knowledge men who have left death behind.*

*Moggallāna, great in spiritual powers,
Encompassed their minds with his own
And searching (he came to see) their minds.
Fully released, without attachment.”*

2. Ability to hear sounds that cannot be heard by persons - Divine Ear

One evening when Sāriputta came to visit Moggallāna, he observed such a serene and calm expression on his friend's face that he questioned Moggallāna if he had dwelt in one of the peaceful abodes of mind. Moggallāna informed Sāriputta that this was not the case, that he had been engaged in a deep talk with the Exalted One. Sāriputta then remarked that the Buddha was living in Sāvatti while they themselves were many miles away in Rājagaha. He then asked if Moggallāna had gone to the Buddha or if the Buddha had come to him. Moggallāna said that neither had happened. They had, by using the divine eye and ear, engaged in a Dhamma talk on the mental faculty of energy. Sāriputta, observing the supernatural powers of his friend, then proclaimed that so powerful were Moggallāna's supernatural powers that if he so wished, like the Buddha, he might be able to live through an entire aeon.

Moggallāna also had the ability to hear the voices of divine beings and spirits. For example, a spirit had warned him of the

impending danger to the Buddha by Devadatta, who was plotting to kill him. Moggallāna also often visited the heavens and lower worlds and asked the beings that dwelt there about the actions that they had performed to obtain such birth. He then conveyed this information to his disciples to encourage them to perform wholesome deeds and refrain from unwholesome deeds.

3. Ability to see things that cannot usually be seen by persons - Divine Eye

Moggallāna often used his divine eye to perceive the whereabouts of the Buddha. He also used it to observe other beings. Once when Sāriputta was seated deep in meditation Moggallāna observed a demon pound his head. He then questioned his friend on how he was feeling. Sāriputta replied that he had a slight headache resulting from the blow. Moggallāna then praised his friend on his powers of concentration while Sāriputta praised his friend on his ability to view the demon which he had not seen.

One such recorded incident occurred when Moggallāna and the monk Lakkhana were descending Vulture's Peak. Moggallāna, who had observed a peta (unhappy spirit) had smiled. Lakkhana, realizing that Moggallāna had viewed something that he had not, questioned him. Moggallāna agreed to give his answer when they were in the presence of the Buddha.

As they approached the Buddha, Lakkhana again questioned Moggallāna as to why he had smiled. Moggallāna replied that he had seen a spirit shaped like a huge snake engulfed in flames, screaming whilst being chased and pecked at by vultures. Moggallāna had felt compassion for the suffering being and then relief in the knowledge that he himself would never in the future have such a birth, as this was his last birth. This relief had caused him to smile. Moggallāna did not think that anyone would believe what he saw unless it was confirmed by the Buddha. He then went on to explain the kammic cause for such a birth. He said that in a former birth this spirit had been a farmer. He had a field, which he was ploughing close to

where a Pacceka (silent) Buddha was residing. The townsfolk often crossed his field to visit the Pacceka Buddha. This upset the farmer and he tried all kinds of methods to dissuade the people from crossing his field. The multitude of devotees, however, ignored his instructions and continued to walk over his field.

The farmer had then watched for an opportunity to observe the Pacceka Buddha leaving his residence, whereupon he had destroyed his belongings and burnt his shelter. The devotees were furious when they found out that the farmer had destroyed the Pacceka Buddha's shelter and belongings. They vented their anger on him by battering him to death. The farmer was reborn in the Avichi hell and after many thousands of years was reborn in Vulture's Peak as the snake ghost (peta) engulfed in flames.

The Buddha confirmed Moggallāna's sighting and story by saying that He Himself had viewed the same spirit on the day He attained enlightenment.

Like the Buddha, Moggallāna could also view the law of kamma in operation. He could see persons with unwholesome deeds being reborn in peta and asura realms and those with meritorious deeds being reborn in heavenly realms. The *Petavatthu* documents 51 incidents and the *Vimānavatthu* 85 incidents that Moggallāna had observed and used to help teach his disciples the effects of one's wholesome and unwholesome intentional actions. In fact, with this ability, Moggallāna drew many disciples of other teachers into the Noble Path. This resulted in many jealousies among other teachers who lost disciples.

4. Ability to travel through space - Astral Travel

During the seventh rainy season the Buddha recited the *Abhidhamma*, the higher teachings, to the Devas in the *Tāvātimsa* Heaven, for three months. Using astral travel, Moggallāna visited the Buddha from time to time to inform Him of the progress of the Noble Order.

On another occasion when Moggallāna was seeking the Buddha, he saw that the Buddha had visited a Brahma realm to shake the arrogance of a Brahma. A certain Brahma was under the false view that as Brahma he was above the Buddha and the Noble Order. The Buddha, seeing this and realizing the potential of this Brahma, appeared on his throne. Moggallāna⁶, seeing and realizing the Buddha's intention, joined Him and thus subdued the pride and arrogance of the Brahma. The subdued Brahma was ready to accept the supremacy of the Buddha and His Teachings.

Moggallāna also used his ability of astral travel to help Sāriputta when he was sick. The doctor had recommended a medicine made of lotus stalks, which were only available in the Himalayan mountains. Moggallāna immediately travelled to the mountains and obtained the medicine required to cure his friend.

It was also Moggallāna who brought the Ānanda Bhodi to Sāvatti from Buddha Gaya. Ānanda asked the Buddha what could be done to help the many disappointed devotees who travelled to Sāvatti to see the Buddha, only to find that He was away attending to another in distress. The Buddha asked for a sapling from the great Bodhi tree under which He had attained enlightenment to be planted in Sāvatti. He then proclaimed that the Bodhi Tree would be a symbol of the Buddha that devotees could venerate in His absence. Moggallāna, using his supernormal powers, travelled to Buddha Gaya and brought the sapling.

5. Mastery of matter- Supernormal Locomotion

The text indicates many instances where, at the request of the Buddha, Moggallāna used his supernormal powers to shake people out of their inaction and non diligence in the Dhamma. On one occasion the monks residing in the mansion of Migara's

⁶. Anuruddha, Mahā Kassapa, and Mahā Kappina, observing independently the intentions of the Buddha, also joined Him.

mother were negligent and slothful. The Buddha instructed Moggallāna to instil confidence in them by performing a miracle. Moggallāna shook the mansion by pushing it with his big toe. The monks, seeing the supernormal feat and recognizing the powers of Moggallāna, went back to diligent practice and attained higher levels of spiritual development.

In another instance Moggallāna observed that the King of the Heavens, Sakka, was being negligent and embroiled in sense pleasures. Travelling to Sakka's heavenly abode, Moggallāna used his big toe to shake Sakka's mansion and thus reminded him of his mortality and the impermanence of all phenomenon. Sakka then went back to a more righteous way of life.

Once the Buddha and His retinue were going through great hardship as the rains were delayed and famine had set in. Moggallāna offered to turn the earth so that the rich soil underneath would be brought up and crops harvested. The Buddha declined Moggallāna's offer saying that many innocent creatures would be killed if such an act was performed as there were many small creatures that lived in the soil. Moggallāna then offered to build a road by using his supernormal powers, between the city in which they were residing and another which was lush with vegetation. The Buddha again declined, saying that they would instead weather out this famine, which would soon be over. These are the only documented instances where the Buddha declined a request made by Moggallāna. In general, the Buddha, who had great confidence and respect for Moggallāna, supported his decisions and requests.

6. Transformation of form

The most famous and spectacular of Moggallāna's powers was his ability to transform himself into other beings. The power struggle and ultimate defeat of the King Cobra Nandopananda are well-known. The Visuddhimagga describes this battle as follows. On one occasion the Buddha, with a retinue of 500 Arahants, visited the Tāvātimsa Heaven. In so doing they passed above and disturbed the divine royal snake, Nandopananda. In anger he surrounded Mount Sineru with his

massive coils and spread his huge hood so that the world below was enveloped in darkness. Several of the monks offered to subdue the enraged snake but the Buddha, realizing the powers of the divine serpent, chose Moggallāna for the task. Moggallāna then transformed himself into a huge snake and engaged Nandopananda in a terrible battle. Drawing upon one power after another, appearing in various shapes, he overcame his opponent. In the last phase of the battle he assumed the form of Supanna, a celestial eagle, arch-enemy of the snake. At this point Nandopananda retreated in defeat and Moggallāna, resuming his form as a monk, brought the subdued Nandopananda to the Buddha for an apology.

In the Jataka there are many references to Moggallāna's past births. In many birth stories the Bodhisatta, Moggallāna and Sāriputta had been together as brothers, friends, ministers or disciples⁷. There are also recorded instances of other past associations. The Jātaka also brings to light the strong bond between Moggallāna and Sāriputta. For in many instances they were associated and close friends. In general, however, Sāriputta was of a higher station than Moggallāna though this is more apparent when they were both in animal births⁸. In all, more than 30 instances of their past associations are recorded in the Jataka.

Moggallāna's Enlightenment

Moggallāna has left a legacy of his experiences in sixty-three verses, which are recorded in the Theragāthā. The following emphasize his inwardly-directed efforts, his powers of meditation, his happiness at his friends' emancipation, His experience of the truth of no soul and of the supernormal, and his final deliverance.

7. Jātaka 488, 509, 542, 543, 326, 401, 423, 522.

8. Jātaka 73, 206, 486, 272, 361, 438, 37, 316, 490.

*“Living in the forest, subsisting on alms food,
Delighting in the scraps that came into our bowl,
Let us tear apart the army of Death
Firmly concentrated within ourselves.*

*Living in the forest, subsisting of alms food,
Delighting in the scraps that came into our bowl,
Let us shatter the army of Death
As an elephant does a hut of reeds.*

*Then there was terror, then there was excitement,
When Sāriputta, possessed of many qualities,
Had been quenched.*

*Truly the constituent elements are impermanent,
Subject to arising and passing away.
Having arisen, they cease,
Their quiescence is happiness.*

*Those who see the five elements of existence as other
And not as self,
Have pierced a subtle thing as a tip of hair
With an arrow.*

*Flashes of lightning fall upon the cleft
Of the mountains Vebhāra and Pandava
But gone within the cleft he meditates,
The son of the peerless, Stable One.*

*Tranquil, still the sage resorts
To remote places for his lodgings,
A true heir of the supreme Buddha
He is venerated even by Brahma.*

*In but a moment I can create
Ten times a million bodies,
I am skilled in transformation,
I am the master of psychic powers.*

*A master of concentration and knowledge,
Moggallāna, gone to perfection*

*A sage in the dispensation of the Detached One,
With concentrated faculties has cut off his bonds
As an elephant bursts a rotten creeper.*

*The Teacher has been served by me,
The Buddha's Teaching has been done,
The heavy burden has been dropped,
The conduit to becoming has been uprooted.*

*The goal has been attained by me,
For the sake of which I have gone forth,
From the home life into the homeless,
The destruction of all fetters.”*

Theragāthā 1146, 1147, 1158, 1160, 1167, 1168, 1182-1186

Moggallāna's Last Days

Even though Moggallāna had supernormal powers and was an Arahanth he did not, unlike his friend Sāriputta, have a peaceful death. Moggallāna's ability to see into other realms and explain the operation of the law of kamma, together with his extraordinary teaching skills, made him very popular. Many disciples of other teachers were placed in the Buddha's Noble Path by Moggallāna.

Ascetics of other sects, seeing their numbers dwindle, decided to kill Moggallāna. Unwilling to perform the evil deed themselves for fear of exposure, they hired assassins to kill Moggallāna. Moggallāna was meditating in his hut in Black Rock on Mount Isigili on the outskirts of Rājagaha when they made the first attempt. Moggallāna used his supernormal powers to escape unseen. The second time too the assassins found an empty hut. On the third⁹ attempt Moggallāna's supernormal powers momentarily deserted him. The assassins battered and crushed his bones and left him for dead.

⁹. Seventh according to some texts. Moggallāna hoped that they would reconsider, as the act of killing an Arahanth would have grave consequences. The thieves, however, greedy for the money, persisted.

Moggallāna, however, was the second chief disciple of the Buddha. He was not going to pass away without first paying homage to the Buddha and obtaining permission for his Parinibbāna. Gathering his battered body with supreme effort, using astral travel, Moggallāna went to where the Buddha was residing and asked permission to die. Then, as was the custom for the chief disciple, he dispensed the Dhamma to those in attendance, performed many miracles to give confidence to the multitude gathered, and passed away to Parinibbāna. Moggallāna passed away two weeks after his friend Sāriputta, in the month of Kattika (October/November).

The monks and disciples were outraged at the untimely death of their beloved teacher. The king ordered an investigation into the murder and caught the assassins, who informed him that they had been hired by Niganthanātha ascetics. The king then had the ascetics tortured and killed, in keeping with the laws at that time for murderers.

The devotees also asked the Buddha why Mahā Moggallāna had come to such a painful death. The Buddha explained the law of kamma that even an Arahant could not avoid, and spoke of a grave crime that Moggallāna had performed in a previous birth.

At the instigation of his wife, Moggallāna had murdered both his parents, who were blind, by pounding them to death. His aged parents, who thought that they were being attacked by a band of robbers, implored their son, whom they loved, to save himself. Little did they know that it was their own son, who, in the guise of robbers, had committed this evil act. Moggallāna suffered in hell for many thousands of years and had to die a violent death even as an Arahant, for killing one's parents is a grave (garuka) crime, the effects of which are not easily extinguished.

Moggallāna's ability to teach and his supernormal powers assisted him in his role of training the Sangha and the multitude. It was also Moggallāna who, together with his friend Sāriputta, brought the errant monks back to the Buddha when Devadatta caused a schism in the Sangha. He also assisted in

the consolidation of the Dhamma and the administration of the Sangha.



CHAPTER 8

Ānanda

Ananda was one of Prince Siddhattha's cousins. His father was Amitodana, a younger brother of King Suddhodana. As his birth brought a lot of happiness to his family he was named Ānanda. He was born on the same day as Prince Siddhattha.

Ānanda was ordained as a monk in the second year of the Buddha's ministry, when he was thirty-seven years old. Shortly after, hearing a sermon by the Ven. Punna Mantaniputta, he attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. When the Buddha was fifty-five years old, Ānanda became His personal attendant.

The Buddha addressed the assembled monks and informed them that He had many attendants¹⁰ who had assisted him periodically but none of them had been able to fulfil their duties perfectly. "It is time" he said, "to have a reliable, trustworthy attendant." He then asked if any of the assembled monks would like to be His personal attendant. All the noble ones gathered immediately responded to His request by offering their services. Ānanda, however, who dearly wished to be His attendant, modestly held back, thinking, "The Buddha would surely appoint me if I were the most suitable person." The Buddha, with His divine eye, observed that many eons ago Ānanda had aspired to be a personal attendant of a Buddha, the fulfilment of which was to occur during His reign. Refusing the offers of the other monks, He turned to Ānanda and offered the post to him.

¹⁰. The former attendants were Nāgasamāla, Nāgita, Upavāna, Sunakkhatta, Cunda, Sāgata, Rāhula and Meghiya.

Ānanda agreed to accept the post if the Buddha would agree to eight conditions. Four of them related to the non-acceptance of gifts and favours from the Buddha. Ānanda wanted to ensure that there would be no doubts cast that he had accepted this position in order to obtain material gain. The other four related to the performance of his duties while being mindful of his own advancement in the Noble Path. The Buddha agreed to Ānanda's requests.

The fact that Ānanda felt comfortable in asking the Buddha, whom he loved and respected and to whom he was loyal, for a conditional acceptance, illustrates the relationship between the Buddha and His monks and the manner in which the Buddha ran His ministry. The Buddha was the undisputed leader. But there was no fear under His reign. Monks felt free to voice their opinion and to question the Buddha at will.

In truth, the term personal attendant does not convey all the duties and responsibilities carried out by Ānanda. In addition to taking care of all the Buddha's personal needs Ānanda was an executive assistant to the Buddha and helped in the management of His large retinue of monks, nuns and devotees. He also had the unique advantage of hearing most of the Buddha's discourses and because of his unusually retentive memory, was declared the Guardian of the Dhamma.

To attain the position of personal attendant of a Buddha, one needs to aspire to the position and perform many meritorious deeds over a period of 100,000 world cycles. Ānanda made this aspiration 100,000 world cycles ago, at the time of the Buddha Padumuttara. At that time he was born as Sumana, the younger half-brother of the Bodhisatta Gotama (known at that time by the name Jatila). He provided the requisites during the three months of the rainy season to the Padumuttara Buddha and His retinue of 100,000 monks. He then aspired to be the personal attendant of a future Buddha. The Buddha Padumuttara looked into the future and saw that this aspiration would be fulfilled. He informed Ānanda that in 100,000 world cycles he would be the personal attendant of the Buddha Gotama. From this time onwards Ānanda continued to perform meritorious deeds to

fulfil his aspiration.

In addition to being the Guardian of the Dhamma, Ānanda was well-known for two other important events that he initiated. They were the planting of the Ānanda Bodhi and the founding of the order of the nuns.

Many persons came to Jetavana to pay homage to the Buddha and to learn His teachings. Sometimes when they came, the Buddha was away helping a person in distress. As many had travelled long distances to see Him and were disappointed, Ānanda asked the Buddha what could be done to help these disappointed devotees.

The Buddha then asked Ānanda to bring a sapling from the Bodhi Tree in Buddha Gayā and plant it in Jetavana. He then said: “In my absence, let my devotees pay homage to the great Bodhi Tree that gave me protection during enlightenment. Let the Bodhi Tree be a symbol of my presence. Those who honour the Bodhi Tree would in essence be honouring and paying homage to me.”

Ever since that time, Buddhists from all over the world have venerated the Bodhi Tree as they would the Buddha, with scented water, flowers and incense. Many uninformed persons have misunderstood this symbolic action by saying that Buddhists worship trees. The Buddha statue, the Bodhi Tree, the relics of the Buddha, are but symbols of the Buddha that people use to focus the mind on the compassionate and serene qualities of the Buddha. The veneration of the Buddha provides the tranquillity and peace of mind that many people cannot readily acquire to meditate, study, and listen to His teachings.

It was at Ānanda’s request, on behalf of Mahā Pajāpati, that the Buddha instituted the order of the nuns. The Buddha had initially refused Mahā Pajāpati Gotami’s request to be ordained. It was after Ānanda’s question as to whether women were incapable of reaching spiritual heights and the Buddha’s reply that women were as capable



as men of reaching spiritual heights, that the Buddha had agreed to the formation of the order of the nuns. As such, women had a special regard and respect for Ānanda. This, together with his pleasing nature, made Ānanda very popular. It is said that there were none who spoke ill of Ānanda or were envious of him despite his honoured position and proximity to the Buddha.

The documented past life stories of Ānanda reflect that he was seldom a god (unlike his stepbrother Anuruddha) and seldom an animal (unlike his cousin Devadatta). Ānanda was often a human and in many births was the brother of the Bodhisatta.

Even though Ānanda was very learned and knowledgeable, he only reached the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna, during the lifetime of the Buddha. His deep attachment to the Buddha prevented him from attaining Arahantship. As a result, he was not aware of the exact moment when the Buddha passed away. Thinking that the Buddha had attained Parinibbāna, he informed his stepbrother Anuruddha. Anuruddha, who was an Arahant, observing with his divine eye that this was not the case, clarified to Ānanda that the Blessed One had not yet

passed away. He had reached a meditative stage known as Cessation of Perception and Feeling.

Shortly after the Buddha's Parinibbāna, on the day of the First Council of the Dhamma, (Sangāyana) Ānanda attained Arahantship. Ānanda was designated by the Buddha as the leader in five categories. They were:

Erudition
Retentive memory
Good behaviour
Steadfastness
Ministering of care

Thirty of Ānanda's verses have been preserved in the Theragāthā. The following illustrate his encouragement to associate with good friends and those well-versed in the Dhamma.

*“A clever man should not make friends
With a malicious man, or an angry man, or an envious man,
One delighting in (others') misfortune;
Contact with a bad man is evil.*

*A clever man should make friends
With a man of faith, a pleasant man,
With wisdom and great learning;
Contact with a good man is fortunate.*

*See the painted puppet
A heap of sores, a compounded body, diseased,
With many bad intentions,
For which there is no permanent stability.*

*Desiring understanding of the doctrine,
One should associate with that disciple of the Buddha,
Who has great learning, is expert in the doctrine,
Possesses wisdom, is of such a kind.*

Theragāthā 1018-1020, 1030

Ānanda declared the following verses to inspire others to follow his example as the Guardian of the Dhamma. He also encouraged others to carefully examine and understand the teachings prior to their practice.

*“82,000 teachings from the Buddha
I have received,
2,000 more from his disciples;
Now 84,000 are familiar to me.*

*Who nothing has heard and nothing understood
(those void of Dhamma)
He ages only oxen-like
His stomach (body) only, grows and grows
But his insight deepens not.
Thou follow him who has heard much
Then what is heard shall not decline.
This is the tap-root of the holy life;
Hence a Dhamma Guardian you should be!*

*Knowing what comes first and what last
Knowing well the meaning too,
Skilful in grammar (analytical knowledge) and in other terms
The well-grasped meaning he examines.*

*Keen in his patient application
He strives to weigh the meaning well.
At the right time he makes the effort
And inwardly collects his mind.”*

(Theragāthā 1024,1025,1027-1029)

Ānanda passed away at the age of one hundred and twenty. The Dhammapada states that as people on both sides of the River Rohini wanted his relics, Ānanda preached the Dhamma to the people while seated in the air in the middle of the river and wished that his body would split in two with one part falling on one bank of the river and the other part on the other bank of the river. He then entered the ecstatic meditation on fire. Flames instantly issued from his body and, as willed, one portion of his



relics fell on one side of the river while the other portion fell on the other side. The people then enshrined his relics in stupas so that they could honour him.

Ānanda's greatest contribution to the Dhamma occurred three months after the Parinibbāna of the Lord Buddha. The Buddha had declared Ānanda as the guardian of the Dhamma because of his retentive memory. At the First Sangha Council, Ānanda, under the direction of Mahā Kassapa, led the five hundred Arahants in the recitation of the Teachings and helped in the codification of the Dhamma. This method of preservation of the Dhamma was used again in later years. The second Sangha Council was led by one of Ānanda's pupils.

CHAPTER 9

Mahā Kassapa

In the district of Magadha, in a village known as Mahātittha, there lived a wealthy Brāhmin couple named Kapila and Sumanādevi. They had a son whom they named Pippali Kassapa.

As was the custom at that time, when he came of age his parents looked for a suitable girl for him to marry. Pippali, however, was not interested in marriage and informed his parents that he would look after them until they passed away and then take to the life of an ascetic. His parents were not happy with this decision and insisted that he should select a suitable girl. To appease his parents, Kassapa had his goldsmith

make a beautiful statue of a girl out of solid gold and said that he would marry if they could find a girl who resembled the statue.

Kapila then summoned eight Brāhmins, and after giving them a large sum of money and the statue, asked them to roam the country in search of a bride who resembled the golden statue, for his son.

The Brāhmins were in a village named Sāgala when they saw an exquisitely beautiful girl named Bhaddā Kapilāni who resembled the statue. They spoke to her parents and found that they were agreeable to the marriage. They then went back and reported to Kapila and Sumanadevi that a suitable bride had been found.

When Kassapa heard about his oncoming marriage to Bhaddā, he decided to write to her. Explaining that he was interested in becoming an ascetic he asked her to refuse this proposal and look for a suitable match elsewhere. Unknown to him, Bhaddā too had no desire to marry and had chosen instead the life of an ascetic. She too had sent a similar letter to Kassapa requesting that he look elsewhere for a bride. The letters, however, were intercepted by both sets of parents who were aware of their children's feelings, and loving letters agreeing to the marriage were substituted.

A large wedding was arranged, and with great ceremony Bhaddā was given in marriage to Kassapa. Neither one of them, however, was interested in married life. The influence of their past meritorious actions and lives as ascetics was so strong that they both decided to live a celibate life. They lived in harmony as good friends, looking after Kassapa's old parents until they passed away as was the custom, and inherited the family wealth and estates.

Mahā Kassapa's Renunciation

One day when Kassapa was supervising the ploughing of the field in preparation for the growing season, he was shaken by a common sight that had gone unnoticed by him in the past. The

ploughing had resulted in many worms and little creatures being unearthed and a host of birds, attracted by the worms, were circling his field and feasting.

Observing the destruction of many innocent creatures, Kassapa questioned his workers as to who was responsible for their suffering and death. His workers then informed him that he was responsible, as they were ploughing the field on his account¹¹. This statement had a profound effect on Kassapa. He decided that he would hand over the family wealth to Bhaddā and take the life of an ascetic in search of deliverance.

Unknown to him, at about the same time Bhaddā had made a similar decision. Her servants had put out some sesame seeds to dry in the sun. Little creatures had flocked around the sesame seeds and raucous birds had gathered to feast on the tiny creatures. Bhaddā had seen the suffering of the little creatures and asked her servants who was responsible for their suffering and death. She too had been told that she was responsible, as it was on her instruction and for her consumption that the sesame seeds had been spread out in the sun.

Reflecting on the suffering, Bhaddā decided to hand over all the family wealth to Kassapa and take to the life of an ascetic. So it was that in the evening both Kassapa and Bhaddā discussed their decision to find that they were both of one mind. Talking it over they both decided to take to the holy life and seek deliverance from suffering. Shaving each others' heads they donned the simple robes of ascetics and left their home.

When their servants and the villagers heard about their renunciation they cried and lamented and tried to dissuade the couple. Kassapa and Bhaddā, however, had made up their minds. Distributing their wealth among the servants, they

¹¹. This does not accord with the Buddha's teachings of kamma. According to the Buddha intention is required for the law of kamma to operate. Kassapa and Bhaddā, however, had not as yet met the Teacher and were unaware of the true operation of the law of kamma.

continued on their way. And thus they wandered, Kassapa in front with Bhaddā following a few yards behind, in search of a teacher.

After some time, Kassapa reflected that it was not appropriate that his very beautiful former wife should follow him. People, he reflected, would assume that he was associated with Bhaddā and would start rumours and make accusations. As they were both pure and innocent of any wrongdoing, the wrongful thoughts of the people would then cause them much suffering. Discussing his thoughts with Bhaddā, he requested that she not follow him any longer. Bhaddā, who agreed with his decision, separated from him at the next junction. Whilst Kassapa took the road to his right, she took the road to her left.

The text indicates that the earth trembled at this renunciation due to the purity and merit of the ascetics. The Buddha, observing the trembling of the earth, saw with his super-normal vision that one of



his future great disciples was on his way to meet Him. He

decided to meet Kassapa and walked down the road towards Mahātittha.

On the road between Nālanda and Rājagaha the Buddha sat down under a fig tree to await His future disciple. The moment Kassapa laid eyes on the Buddha he knew that he had found his Master. The Buddha stood in all His radiance, surrounded by an aura. Falling at the Buddha's feet and saluting Him respectfully, Kassapa asked permission to enter the Noble Order.

The Buddha then dispensed a discourse in which He instructed Kassapa on three accounts. He instructed Kassapa in order that he may:

Train himself so as to have a keen sense of shame for doing unwholesome deeds towards seniors, novices and those of middle status in the Noble Order.

Listen, examine, reflect and absorb the teachings that are conducive to wholesome deeds.

Be mindful of the body and its thoughts and actions.

After this discourse the Master and His new disciple walked back to Rājagaha.

On the way the Buddha wanted to rest under the root of a tree. Kassapa then took his outer robe, folded it four-fold and asked the Buddha to sit on it, as His doing so would bring great benefit to him for a long time. The Buddha accepted Kassapa's robe and commented on its softness. Hearing this, Kassapa immediately offered his robe to the Buddha by saying, "May the Blessed One, out of compassion for me, accept this robe." The Buddha then asked Kassapa if he would wear the worn-out, coarse rag-robe that He was wearing. Full of joy, Kassapa accepted the Buddha's rag-robe and agreed to wear it. Kassapa was the only monk with whom the Buddha had exchanged robes. Though the significance of this exchange was not described in the text, it may have reminded Kassapa of an ancient aspiration to be foremost among the monks in austere

practices, because he took upon himself the thirteen austere practices.

Mahā Kassapa's Aspiration

One hundred thousand world cycles ago, at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha, Kassapa was born as a wealthy landowner named Vedeha, and at that time too, Bhaddā had been his wife. The Padumuttara Buddha was residing at the Khemā Deer Park near the city of Hamsavati. Vedeha observed the Padumuttara Buddha appointing a monk by the name of Mahānisabha as the disciple foremost in austere ascetic practices and His third most pre-eminent disciple. Inspired by the Padumuttara Buddha, Vedeha invited the Buddha and His retinue to his home for their meals on the following day.

When the Buddha and His monks were eating Vedeha noticed that the monk Mahānisabha was walking the streets on the alms round. Vedeha invited the elder to partake of his alms at his home. When Mahānisabha refused, he took the elder's bowl and filled it with fragrant food and handed it back to him. He then questioned the Buddha as to why Mahānisabha had not accepted his invitation to come to his home for meals. The Padumuttara Buddha then explained that many world cycles ago Mahānisabha had aspired to be foremost in austere practices, and that in keeping with his aspiration he only accepted food obtained by going on the alms round.

Vedeha was suffused with happiness and inspired by Mahānisabha. He decided that he too would like to be declared as a monk foremost in austere practices and the disciple of a future Buddha. Offering the Buddha Padumuttara and His retinue of monks meals and the requirements for seven days, he prostrated himself in front of the Padumuttara Buddha and aspired to be the monk foremost in austere practices as the disciple of a future Buddha. Seeing that Vedeha would fulfil this aspiration, the Buddha Padumuttara declared that at the time of the Gotama Buddha, Vedeha would be known as Mahā Kassapa, and would be declared the third most pre-eminent monk and foremost in austere practices.

The relationship between the Gotama Buddha and Kassapa

started many lifetimes ago. The Jataka stories document nineteen births in which Kassapa was related to the Bodhisatta, sometimes as his father, sometimes as his brother, and often as his teacher or friend. As such the immediate bond that formed when Kassapa saw the Buddha had deep roots. Kassapa also renewed his aspiration in the presence of succeeding Buddhas and performed many meritorious deeds over countless years. As foretold, Kassapa fulfilled his aspiration at the time of the Gotama Buddha. The Buddha appointed Kassapa foremost among the monks who persevered in austere practices.

The Buddha repeatedly praised Kassapa's commitment to austere practices and his detached behaviour. He said:

“When Kassapa goes among families his mind is not attached, not caught up, not fettered. He thinks, “Let those who want gain acquire gain! Let those who want merit do merit!” He is pleased and glad at the gains of others, just as he is pleased and glad at his own gains. Such a monk is fit to go among families.”

“When he preaches the Doctrine, he will not do so for the sake of personal recognition and praise but for letting them know the teaching of the exalted one so that those who hear it may accept it and practise accordingly. He will preach it because of the excellence of the Teaching and out of compassion and sympathy.”

Samyutta Nikāya

Mahā Kassapa's Practice of Austerities

Two interesting encounters with the Devas further illustrate Kassapa's commitment to austere practices. The first is his reaction to the female Deva Lājā's ministering. Lājā could remember that she owed her present splendour to an offering she had made to the great elder. Lājā, who had been a poor woman, had offered parched rice to the elder with great devotion. On her way back home she had been bitten by a poisonous snake and had died. As a result of her offering she had been reborn in the Tāvātimsa Heaven in great splendour.

The grateful Lājā decided to sweep the elder’s cell and fill his vessels with water. On the third day he saw the Deva in all her radiance cleaning his cell. Kassapa questioned her as to what she was doing and on being told, asked her not to minister to his needs in the future as he was bent on austere practices. The dejected Lājā left in great sadness. The Buddha, seeing the dejected Lājā, came before her in compassion and explained to her the meritorious effects of her ministering. He then consoled her by informing her of the aspiration the elder had made.

The second instance was when Kassapa was residing in the Pippali Cave. He had attained a meditative stage and remained thus for seven days. The elder had then set out to obtain alms for Rājagaha. Inspired by the great elder, the Devas had descended to Earth with heavenly food. Kassapa, however, had refused the nectar of the Devas saying that he preferred to give this opportunity to the poor so that they could acquire merit. The disappointed Devas returned to the heavens and told Sakka, the King of the Heavens, about Kassapa’s refusal.

When Sakka heard about Kassapa’s refusal there arose in him a great desire to wait upon the great elder. Disguising himself as a poor weaver he offered Kassapa rice. When the elder accepted the food there arose a heavenly fragrance and Kassapa was instantly aware that he had been tricked by the Deva. He then admonished Sakka for taking the opportunity to acquire merit away from the poor. Sakka then asked Kassapa if he had failed to acquire merit from this deed due to his trickery. After informing Sakka that he had acquired merit despite his trick, Kassapa continued on his alms round.

The Buddha also informed Kassapa of the virtues of ascetic life and of the benefit of practising austerities in gaining emancipation. This not only encouraged Kassapa to continue in his austere practices but also encouraged him to pass them on to others by being a role model. The Buddha said:

“ Formerly, Kassapa, there were elders of the Order who were forest dwellers, living on alms food, wearing rag-robles, using only the threefold set of robes, having few wants and being contented living secluded and aloof from society, energetic, and

they praised and encouraged such a way of life. When such elders or younger Bhikkhus visited the monastery, they were gladly welcomed and honoured as being dedicated to the practice of the Dhamma. Then those who welcomed and honoured those noble monks would also strive to emulate them in their way of life and this would be of great benefit to them for a long time.”

“But nowadays, Kassapa, those who are honoured when visiting a monastery are not monks of austere and earnest life, but those who are well-known and popular and are amply provided with the requisites of a monk. These are made welcome and honoured, and their hosts try to emulate them, which will bring them harm for a long time. Hence one will be right in saying that such monks are harmed and overpowered by what does harm to a monk’s life.”

Samyutta Nikāya

Kassapa, who had made the aspiration to be the monk foremost in austerities at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha, took these words to heart. In fact, on one occasion he admonished Ānanda who had taken 200 novice monks to the homes of disciples before they were advanced in the Dhamma. Attracted to worldly pleasures, the novices had given up the order and gone back to the family life. Kassapa admonished Ānanda for not taking care of his pupils. The wealthy often invited the Buddha and His retinue for meals. Kassapa, by going on the alms round and refusing such invitations, ensured that the opportunity of this meritorious act of giving alms was available to the poor. He stopped at every house on the path and accepted every gift with equal grace.

Kassapa’s austere life and detachment are explained by him in his verses:

*“Down from my mountain lodge I came one day
And made my round for alms about the street
A leper there I saw eating his meal
And courteously I halted at his side.*

*He with his hand all leprous and diseased
Put in my bowl a morsel. As he threw,
A finger broke off and fell into my food.*

*At a wall nearby I ate my share
Not at that time or after felt disgust.*

*For only he who takes as they come
The scraps of food, cow's urine for medicine,
Lodging beneath a tree, the patchwork robe,
Truly is a man contented everywhere."*

Theragāthā 1054-1057

On another occasion the Buddha requested Kassapa to teach errant monks. The Buddha said, "Exhort the monks, Kassapa. Either I, Kassapa, should exhort the monks, or you. Either I or you should give them a discourse on the Dhamma". These words imply the confidence the Buddha had in Kassapa, as not every Arahant had the ability to teach in a manner that would be understood.

The text did not specify why the Buddha chose Kassapa over his chief disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna for this instruction. They too were excellent teachers. It could be that this instruction was given after their passing away or just before, as the Buddha was aware that Kassapa would outlive Him, unlike his chief disciples who would pass away before He did. It could also have been because the Buddha saw in His monks a movement away from austere practices to a life of comfort and materialism. Kassapa, who led an austere life, would have been the perfect role model for the errant monks.

Kassapa often questioned the Buddha, as did the other monks. On one occasion, Kassapa asked the Buddha why, early in His dispensation, there were fewer rules for the monks and more Arahants, while later there were more rules for the monks and fewer Arahants. The Buddha replied as follows:

"So it happens, Kassapa, when beings deteriorate and the true Dhamma vanishes: then there are more rules and fewer

Arahanths. There will be, however, no vanishing of the Dhamma until a sham Dhamma arises in the world. But when a sham Dhamma arises in the world, there will be more rules and fewer Arahanths.”

“But, Kassapa, it is not a cataclysm of the four elements - earth, water, fire and air that make the Dhamma disappear. Nor is the reason for its disappearance similar to the overloading of a ship that causes it to sink. It is rather the presence of five detrimental attitudes that causes the obscuration and disappearance of the Dhamma.

“These are the five: It is the lack of respect and regard for the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the training, and for meditative concentration on the part of monks, nuns, and male and female devotees. But so long as there is respect and regard for these five things the Dhamma will remain free of obscuration and will not disappear.”

It is important to note that it is not only the Sangha that have been entrusted with the preservation of the Dhamma. Even the lay devotees can and should contribute to its preservation. In fact, each and every one of us should do our part to ensure the preservation of the Dhamma in whatever way we can to ensure the availability of the Dhamma for future generations.

Kassapa did not question the Buddha as to when a sham Dhamma would appear in the world or as to what exactly He meant by a sham Dhamma. Even though there are many traditions of Buddhism in the world they all contain the Four Noble Truths and the Doctrine of Dependent Origination which is the core of the Buddha’s teaching.

Even though the Buddha often commended Kassapa for his austere practices and detached manner, He felt deep compassion for the ageing elder. On two occasions the Buddha reminded Kassapa that now that he was old, his coarse, worn-out rag-robe may be uncomfortable against his skin and that he should now wear soft robes. He also requested him to accept invitations from householders for alms, and to live in monasteries without resorting to the alms round and dwelling in

the forest. Kassapa, however, refused, saying that he had been a forest dweller and had worn rag-robles for a long time, and recommended this behaviour to others. He also said that he had few wants and that he was contented and happy with what he had, and that he had also recommended this behaviour to others. As such, he preferred to remain in the austere practices which he had on many occasions recommended to others.

The Buddha then questioned him as to why he led such an austere life and he replied that it was for his own well-being and with compassion for later generations. He said that they could then emulate his exemplary behaviour and be inspired by him. For not only did he preach austerity to others but he also exemplified it in his behaviour. The Buddha then praised him for his words and gave permission for him to remain as a forest dweller, wearing rag-robles and going the alms round, as doing so would be of benefit to men and gods.

It almost seems as if the Buddha, realizing that there would be a decline in monastic values after His Parinibbāna, was grooming Kassapa for the important role he would play in the preservation of the Dhamma. The Buddha had specifically declared that there would be no successor after His passing, but that the Dhamma would be their Teacher. Even so the Buddha would have foreseen that Kassapa's austere practices would make him a reputable, outstanding leader who would be respected and honoured by the monks. On many occasions the Buddha praised and encouraged Kassapa's austere practices. Kassapa in turn used every opportunity to encourage his pupils away from materialism and towards the beauty of an austere life.

Kassapa describes the beauties of forest dwelling and the insight and peace it brings which lead to the penetration of the Dhamma as follows:

*“These regions are delightful to my heart
When the kareri creeper spreads its flower wreaths,
When sound the trumpet call of elephants
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

These rocks with hue of dark-blue clouds

*Where streams are flowing, cool and crystal-clear,
With glow-worms covered shining bright
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

*Like towering peaks of dark-blue clouds
Like splendid edifices are these rocks,
Where the birds' sweet voices fill the air
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

*With glades refreshed by (cooling) rain
Resounding with the calls of crested birds,
The cliffs resorted by the seers
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

*Like dark blue blooms of flax they are
Like autumn sky with dark blue clouds,
With flocks of many kinds of birds
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

*No crowds of lay folks have these rocks
But visited by herds of deer,
With flocks of many kinds of birds
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

*Wide gorges where clear water flows,
Haunted by monkeys and by deer,
With mossy carpets covered, moist
These rocky heights delight my heart.*

*No music with five instruments can
Gladden me so much as when,
With mind collected well
Right insight into Dhamma dawns.”*

Theragāthā 1062-1065, 1068-1071

Mahā Kassapa's Great Contribution

Kassapa's greatest contribution to the preservation of the Dhamma occurred after the Parinibbāna of the Lord Buddha.

Of the Buddha's great disciples, only Ānanda and Anuruddha were present in Kusinara when the Buddha passed away, as Sāriputta and Moggalāna had both passed away prior to the Buddha. Kassapa, with his retinue of monks, was travelling towards Kusinara from Pava when they met an ascetic who had with him a Mandārava (coral tree) flower. As this plant grows in the heavens Kassapa knew that something unusual had occurred. He asked the ascetic if he knew anything about the Buddha and the ascetic confirmed that the Buddha had passed away a week prior. He said that the gods and the Malla kings were paying their respects to the Buddha with incense and flowers. This Mandārava plant he said he had taken from the cremation site.

When the monks heard of the Buddha's passing away all who had not attained Arahantsip started to lament and cry. But there was one monk named Subhadda who addressed the other monks and said, "Enough, friends. Do not grieve, do not lament. We are well rid of the Great Ascetic. We have been in trouble by His telling us this is good, this is not good. Now we can do what we like and we do not have to do what we do not like."

The text does not indicate Kassapa's response to these cruel words. Kassapa may have remained silent so as not to cause discord among the monks. Instead, he consoled the grieving by reminding them of the truth of impermanence that the Buddha had taught. Kassapa, however, noted this incident for he cited it when he gathered the Arahants for the First Sangha Council¹².

Kassapa then made a mental aspiration that the funeral pyre would not light until he and his retinue of monks reached Kusinara. In keeping with his aspiration, the sandalwood pyre would not light. When Kassapa and his monks arrived the wood shifted to expose the sacred foot of the Buddha. With bowed head Kassapa and his retinue paid homage to the Buddha, after which the sandalwood pyre caught fire.

¹². The first systematic reciting of all of the Buddha's teaching by Arahants.

After the cremation and distribution of the Buddha's relics Kassapa concentrated his efforts on the preservation of the Dhamma. Remembering Subbadda's challenge and the possibility of moral laxity and the decline of the Dhamma, he proposed holding a Sangha Council where the Dhamma and the rules for the Sangha, the Vinaya, would be reviewed. When he shared his views with the other members of the Noble Order, they agreed.

For the First Sangha Council, Kassapa selected 500 members from the Sangha, all Arahants except for Ānanda. Ānanda, who was known as the guardian of the Dhamma, was selected because of his retentive memory and detailed knowledge of the 84,000 suttas dispensed by the Buddha and His great disciples. Upali, the former barber of the Sākya Prince, who was an Arahant, led the Vinaya as he had been declared by the Buddha as the monk foremost in the knowledge of the monastic rules (Vinaya). All other monks were required to leave Rājagaha for the seven-month duration of the recitation. All the teachings of the Buddha and the monastic discipline were recited. The Dhamma was codified and organized into the five collections (Nikāyas) and the three Pitakas: Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. The first Sangha Council was held in the capital of Rājagaha, in the country of Magadha, under the patronage of King Ajātasattu, three months after the passing away of the Buddha.

Ānanda, with the encouragement of Anuruddha, meditated and reached Arahantship at dawn on the day of the First Sangha Council. He then travelled through the air using astral travel to indicate his deliverance and took his place among the other members of the Council. After the First Council the high regard that the monks had for Kassapa grew further. He was seen as the head of the order even though the Buddha had specifically declared that there would be no successor and that when He was gone, the Dhamma would be the teacher. Before his death, Kassapa handed the Buddha's bowl to Ānanda as a symbol of the continuation of the faithful preservation of the Dhamma. Kassapa, who had generally been recognized as being the most worthy in succession, chose Ānanda as being the most worthy after him.

Kassapa records his deliverance, gratitude and praise of the Master as follows:

*“In the whole field of the Buddha’s following,
Except for the Mighty Master himself,
I stand the foremost in ascetic ways;
No one practises them as far as I.*

*The Master has been served by me,
And all the Buddha’s teaching has been done;
Low have I laid the heavy load I bore,
Cause for rebirth is found in me no more.*

*Gotama the Immeasurable does not cling
To robe, to food or place of lodging,
Like spotless lotus blossoms He is free from taints
Bent on renunciation He transcends the three worlds.*

*The four foundations of mindfulness are His neck
The great Seer has faith and confidence for hands;
Above His brow is perfect wisdom; nobly wise,
He ever wanders with all desire quenched.”*

Theragāthā 1087-1090

Kassapa was known as Mahā Kassapa (great) to distinguish him from others who had the same Brāhmin name. It is said that Mahā Kassapa was the only monk to share seven of the thirty two marks of noble birth that the Buddha had. In keeping with his aspiration the Buddha declared that Mahā Kassapa was foremost among the monks in austere practices. He was also the third most pre-eminent monk among the Buddha’s retinue.

The First Sangha Council was extremely successful in the preservation of “The Word of the Buddha”. This method, the introduction of which resulted in Mahā Kassapa being called “the Father of the Dhamma” was used in subsequent years as and when required. It also led to the use of the term “Theravāda” or recitation of the elders (Arahanths) being used for the Word of the Buddha. Since then there have been six

more Sangha Councils under the Theravada Tradition and one Sangha Council under the Mahayana Tradition. The Second Sangha Council was held 100 years after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, in the Valukarama at Vesali, under the patronage of King Kālasoka. One of Ānanda's pupils, the Arahant Sabbakāmi, who was 120 years old, presided over the Second Sangha Council, and 700 members of the Sangha, all of whom were Arahants, took part. The Second Sangha Council took eight months to complete.

The Third Sangha Council was held 235 years after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha in the 17th year of King Asoka's reign, under his patronage in the Asokārāma in Pataliputta. The Arahant Moggaliputta Tissa presided over the Third Sangha Council and 1,000 members of the Sangha, all of whom were Arahants, took part. The Third Sangha Council took nine months to complete.

About four hundred and fifty years after the Buddha's Parinibbāna, around 90 BC, the Fourth Sangha Council which was in the Theravāda Tradition was held, and the Word of the Buddha was documented for the first time in Matale at the Aluvihara in Sri Lanka, under the patronage of King Vatta Gāmini Abhaya (Walagambahu). Five hundred members of the Sangha, all of whom were Arahants, took part in the Fourth Sangha Council. The Great Commentator, Buddhaghosa, who wrote the *Path of Purification (Visuddhi Magga)*, states that the number of books written on Ola (palm) leaves was so great that when piled one on top of another they reached the height of six elephants.

The next Sangha Council, the First Sangha Council in the Mahāyāna Tradition¹³ was held in Kashmir about five hundred

13. It is not clear exactly when the Mahāyāna Tradition of the Word of the Buddha arose. It is thought to have arisen approximately 300 years after the Buddha's Parinibbāna from the Sanskrit (as opposed to Pāli) translation of the Teachings. Whilst there are some differences between the two traditions, the essence of the Teachings, The Four Noble Truths, remains the same in both traditions. Sanskrit was the language spoken by the people of the upper classes at the

years after the Parinibbāna of the Lord Buddha, under the patronage of King Kanishka (78 BC - 101 AC). The Ven. Vasumitta presided.

The Fifth Sangha Council in the Theravāda Tradition was held in Mandalay in Myanmar (Burma), two thousand four hundred and fifteen years after the passing away of the Lord Buddha, in November 1871 under the patronage of King Mindon. The scriptures written on palm leaves would eventually deteriorate. To ensure the preservation of the scriptures the Buddha Dhamma was inscribed on marble slabs.

Two thousand four hundred Bhikkus led by Venerable Jagarabhivamsa of the Dakkhinarama Monastery assisted by the Venerable Narindabhidhaja and the Venerable Sumangalasami began by reciting the scriptures in the traditional manner. The joint Dhamma recitation lasted five months. Then with the help of skilled crafts men it was inscribed in seven hundred and twenty-nine marble slabs. It took seven years six months and fourteen days to complete the work. The marble slabs were placed in Pitaka Pagodas in the grounds of King Mindon's Kuthodaw Pagoda at the foot of the Mandalay Hill. It is now known as the world's largest book.

The Sixth Sangha Council, known as the Kaba Aye, which was of the Theravāda Tradition, was held in Yangon (Rangoon) in 1954. It was sponsored by the Burmese Government led by the Honorable Prime Minister U Nu. He authorised the construction of the Maha Passana Guha, 'the great cave', an artificial cave similar to the cave in which the First Sangha Council was recited. The Sixth Sangha Council was unique in that the Bhikkus taking part in it came from eight different countries. Two thousand five hundred learned Theravāda monks from Myanmar, Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam graced the momentous occasion.

time of the Buddha. The Buddha used Pali to dispense the Dhamma as it was the language of the common people. The Dhamma was for all irrespective of caste or creed. The Buddha, who denounced the degrading caste system, conferred titles on high-caste Brāhmins such as Mahā Kaccāna and on low-caste persons such as Upali, the former barber of the Sākya Princes.

The late Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw was appointed to question the Dhamma as required and the Venerable Bhadanta Vivittasarabhivamsa answered the questions eloquently. By this time the scriptures had been translated to the native language of all the participating countries except for India. The traditional recitation took two years. The commentaries and different scripts were also examined and reconciled where necessary. This version of the Tripitaka which was sanctioned by the entire Theravāda Buddhist World is now accepted as the pristine teachings of the Buddha Gotama

The retentive powers of the minds of Arahants developed through years and years of meditation, the Buddha's style of teaching which was repetitive, and His instruction to memorize the Teaching so as to hand it down to others, resulted in a comprehensive text for future generations. The fact that only Arahants were admitted to the early Sangayanas ensured that it was only those who had experienced the Truth, those who have seen the supreme bliss of Nibbāna, who participated in this very important preservation. The freedom the Buddha gave to investigate, question and debate also helped, as the teachings were analysed whenever there was a conflict of opinion and corrected to ensure that it was the word of the Buddha which was preserved. Thus the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, the third most pre-eminent monk of the Buddha, often referred to as the "Father of the Dhamma", ensured the preservation of the Dhamma for future generations.



CHAPTER 10

Anuruddha

Anuruddha was one of Prince Siddhattha's cousins. His father, who was named Amitodana, was a younger brother of King Suddhodana. Amitodana had two consorts. Anuruddha, his brother, Mahānāma and his sister, Rohini, were born from one consort. Ānanda, who later became the Buddha's personal attendant, was the son of the other consort. As such Ānanda was Anuruddha's step-brother.

Anuruddha was brought up in immense luxury. His mother, who adored him, ensured that all his wishes were fulfilled. The following story illustrates the luxury he enjoyed. One day Anuruddha, who was playing marbles with his friends, decided to bet on his winning the game. He promised fresh cakes to whoever could beat him at marbles. Luck was against him. Again and again he lost to his friends. Each time he sent a message home to his mother asking for cakes, which she lovingly provided. Finally the message came back that there was no cake. Anuruddha, who had always had everything he wanted, thought that this was a new type of cake and sent a message back asking his mother to send the no-cake to pay off his debt.

When Sākyan princes began giving up their royal lineage to follow the Buddha, Mahānāma, the older of King Amitodana's sons, felt that either Anuruddha or he should follow in the footsteps of their Great Cousin. He called his younger brother and asked him if he would like to be ordained under the Buddha. Anuruddha, however, was too attached to sense pleasure. He was well-known for his love of dance, music and

luxuries. Anuruddha felt that the homeless life would be too harsh for someone brought up in the lap of luxury. Mahanama, however, convinced his brother by describing the trials he would face when conducting the duties and responsibilities he had as a nobleman. When Anuruddha realized that he would have many responsibilities to fulfill if he were to take the place of his older brother and endless rounds of rebirth in samsara where he would toil embroiled in suffering, he decided to renounce his life of luxury. He went to his mother and asked her permission to be ordained under the Sākya Sage.

His mother, who wanted to keep both her sons with her, refused. Thinking that his friend who was heir to the throne would never give up his royal heritage, she informed Anuruddha that he could go if his friend Bhaddiya went with him. Anuruddha spoke to his friend to convince him to join the order. Bhaddiya refused, as the glory of being a future king was more appealing to him. Anuruddha did not give up. Little by little he broke down the defences of his friend. First Bhaddiya agreed to join the Holy Order in seven years. On further insistence and pleading, Bhaddiya reduced the time until finally he agreed to leave in seven days as it would take that long for him to settle his affairs and hand over the succession of the position of viceroy to his successor. On hearing of their decision Anuruddha's step-brother, Ānanda, their cousin, Devadatta, and two other Sākya princes, Kimbila and Bhagu, decided to join them. The princes, together with the court barber, Upāli, left the palace under the pretence of going to the pleasure gardens.

After travelling for some distance the princes handed their royal jewels and rich clothes to Upāli and donned the simple robes of ascetics. They then instructed Upāli to return to the palace with the message that the Sākya princes had left to join the order of the Noble Ones under the great Sākya Sage, the Buddha. Upāli, however, was afraid that the Sākya, who were a very fierce warrior race, would not believe him. He felt that he would be killed, as the Sākya would think that he, Upāli, had robbed and killed the young princes. He asked permission to go with them to be ordained under the Buddha. The princes agreed.



Together, they proceeded to where the Buddha was residing

and asked to be ordained. The Sākyan princes, who were well-known for their pride and arrogance, asked the Buddha to ordain Upāli¹⁴, the barber who had attended them for a long time, first, so that he would then be senior to them. As such they would have to pay obeisance and respect to Upāli, which would help to subdue their Sākyan pride. The Buddha complied to their request.

Before long Anuruddha developed the divine eye – the ability to see beyond the range of the physical eye. He could survey one thousand world systems (the Buddha could see, and spoke of ten thousand world systems). These world systems could be compared to modern-day galaxies. The Buddha said that each world system contained 31 planes of existence¹⁵ in which there were 31 different life forms, and of such world systems He viewed ten thousand. Anuruddha, however, developed his divine eye only to the extent where he could view one thousand world systems. He also had the ability to see into the past births of others and to see their place of rebirth after death.

The development of the divine eye is mundane in character. It can be developed without reaching any of the four stages of spiritual development – Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi or Arahantship. In fact, Anuruddha achieved it prior to obtaining the first stage of sainthood. As such it can be achieved by an unliberated worldling. The divine eye can be developed by one who has reached the fourth stage of mental absorption (Jhāna) and takes this meditation further as described in The Path of Purification (Visudhimagga). Anuruddha often taught this skill to his students. His verses relate his experience thus:

“In fivefold concentration rapt,

¹⁴. Upāli attained Arahantship and was declared by the Buddha as the monk foremost in disciplinary rules (Vinaya) for the monks and nuns.

¹⁵. The thirty-one planes of existence include the four unhappy planes of existence, the human world, six Deva planes of existence with sense pleasures, sixteen Brahma realms of form with pleasures of the mind and four formless Brahma realms.

*The mind in peace and unified,
Inner tranquillity I gained
And thus was purified my eye divine.*

*In fivefold Jhānas standing firm
I knew the passing and rebirth of beings,
Their coming and their going I perceived,
Their life in this world and beyond.*

Theragāthā (916-917)

Despite this achievement Anuruddha had difficulties in reaching Arahantship. His spiritual development, however, helped him to live in harmony with two other monks, Kimbila and Nandiya. These three lived alone in concentration in the Eastern Bamboo Park and met every fifth night to discuss the Dhamma. The harmony that existed between these monks became legendary. The Buddha once asked Anuruddha how he lived in peace and harmony with his two companions. Anuruddha replied, “In deed, words and thoughts I maintain loving kindness towards these venerable ones in public and in private thinking. Why should I not set aside what I want to do and do only what they want to do? We are different in body, Venerable Sir, but one in mind”. The Buddha praised their harmony and held them as an example to other monks to strengthen the unity of the Sangha.

The Buddha then questioned Anuruddha on his difficulties in obtaining liberation. Anuruddha explained that he had reached a higher state of concentration in which he perceived an inner light and radiance but that the vision of light and radiance disappeared very soon and he did not understand the reason. Describing from His own experience the Buddha then explained the eleven imperfections¹⁶ or hindrances that may arise and how to overcome them. Anuruddha followed the Buddha’s advice and developed further and further in refined editative perceptions. He did not, however, reach Arahantship.

¹⁶. Uncertainty, inattention, lethargy and drowsiness, anxiety and fright, elation, inertia, excess of energy, sluggish energy, strong longing, diversity of perceptions and excessive meditation on these forms. 123

One day Anuruddha visited Sāriputta and said, “Brother Sāriputta, with the divine eye I am able to perceive a thousand-fold world systems. My energy is strong, my mindfulness is alert and unconfused, my body is collected and unified. Yet my mind is not freed without clinging from the defiling taints”.

Sāriputta replied, “When you think, Brother Anuruddha, that with your divine eye you can see a thousand-fold world systems, that is self-conceit. When you think of your strenuous energy, your alert mindfulness, your calm body and your concentrated mind, that is agitation. When you think your mind is still not liberated from taints, that is scruples in you. Discard these three things. Do not pay attention to them. Instead, direct the mind towards the deathless.” Anuruddha again went into solitude and directed his mind in earnest to remove these obstructions.

The Buddha, perceiving that Anuruddha was close to enlightenment but that he needed further instruction, appeared before him in form made by mind. The Buddha’s instruction to Anuruddha on the non-diffused helped him reach perfection. An hour after the attainment he proclaimed the following:

*“He knew my heart’s intent, the Master,
He whose peer the world has not seen.
He came to me by mystic power,
With body wrought by mind.*

*To me when further Truths I wished to learn,
The Buddha (this last Truth) revealed:
He who delights in freedom from diffuseness,
That freedom from diffuseness taught to me.*

*And I who heard the blessed Dhamma dwelt,
Constantly intent to keep His rule,
The Threefold Wisdom have I made my own,
And all the Buddha’s ordinance is done.”*

Theragāthā (901-903)

Because of Anuruddha's development of the divine eye the Buddha declared that he was foremost among the monks who had developed the divine eye. Anuruddha had aspired to be foremost in the development of the divine eye one hundred thousand world cycles ago, at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha. On seeing the Buddha Padumuttara appoint one of His monks as foremost in the divine eye and being inspired by the character and qualities of the monk, Anuruddha decided that he would like to have such a position under a future Buddha. With this in mind he performed many meritorious deeds and aspired to be foremost in the divine eye under a future Buddha. The Padumuttara Buddha, seeing that Anuruddha's aspiration would be fulfilled, announced that he would be foremost in the divine eye at the time of the Gotama Buddha.

After the passing away of the Padumuttara Buddha, Anuruddha approached the monk and asked him what meritorious acts he should perform to attain such a position. The monk then instructed him to light many lamps in the shrine that held the relics of the Padumuttara Buddha and to aspire that as these lamps dispelled the darkness, shedding light to the surrounding area so that others could see, may he develop the divine eye to view the many world systems and divine beings. The Theragāthā states that at the time of the Buddha Kassapa, Anuruddha had lit butter lamps to honour the grave of the Kassapa Buddha and had renewed his aspiration. These and many other meritorious acts that Anuruddha performed led to the fulfilment of his aspiration at the time of the Gotama Buddha.

Twenty-three accounts of Anuruddha's past lives have been documented in the Jataka (birth stories of the Buddha). Fifteen of these births were in the celestial realms, thirteen¹⁷ of which were as Sakka, the leader of the Tāvātimsa heaven. It was Anuruddha as Sakka who dressed up as an old Brāhmin to test the Bodhisatta further by asking for His wife, the princess Maddi, in the Vessantara Jātaka. Twice as Sakka, Anuruddha

¹⁷. Jataka 194, 243, 347, 429, 430, 480, 494, 499, 537, 540, 541, 545, and 547.

saved the Bodhisatta's life when He was in danger. It was also Anuruddha as Sakka who showed the Bodhisatta the celestial and hellish worlds in the Guttala Jataka. In the seven¹⁸ earthly past life stories he was often an ascetic. Only one past life story documents birth as an animal (wood pigeon). Anuruddha's strength of character, his loyalty and his compassion to others are illustrated over and over again in these stories. In many births he had been of help to the Bodhisatta. The Theragāthā also documents some of his former lives. Anuruddha, who could see into his past births, described some of them as follows:

*“I know my former lives, and where and how
I lived in years gone by: among the Gods
of the Thirty-Three (Tavatimsa heaven)
I stood of Sakka's rank.*

*Seven times a king of men I held my sway,
Lord of the earth from end to end foursquare,
A conqueror, of Jambudipa (India) chief,
Using no force or arms I ruled by right.*

*Thence seven. And another seven spans of life,
Fourteen former births I recognize,
Even then in the worlds of gods reborn.”*

Theragāthā 913-915

Anuruddha outlived the Buddha and was instrumental in ensuring that the wishes of the divine beings were met at the Buddha's funeral. When the Buddha passed away Mahā Brahma (the Brahmin creator God) and Sakka (ruler of the Tavatimsa Heaven) honoured the Buddha in verses evoking the law of impermanence to console the grieving Brahmas and Devas. The third to speak was Anuruddha, who consoled the grieving with the following words:

¹⁸. Jātaka 423, 488, 509, 522, 485, 276, 515.

*“No movement of breath, but with steadfast heart,
Desireless and tranquil comes the Sage to His end.
With heart unshaken by any painful feelings,
Like a flame extinguished, His mind released.”*

Anuruddha also encouraged and helped Ānanda to attain Arahantship prior to the First Sangha Council. Anuruddha was in charge of the Anguttara Nikāya at the first council. He passed away at Veluva in the Vajjian land with the following prediction of his oncoming death:

*“The Buddha has my loyalty and love,
And all of the Buddha’s Law is done.
Low have I laid the heavy load I bore,
Cause for rebirth is found in me no more.*

*In Veluva, in Vajjian land, it will be
That life will reach its final term for me;
And I beneath the bamboo-thicket’s shade that day,
Free from all taints shall wholly pass away.”*

Theragāthā 918-919



CHAPTER 11

Mahā Kaccāna

In the district of Ujjeni, in the capital city of Avanti, there lived a Brāhmin couple of the Kaccāyana clan named Tiritavaccha and Candimā. As the Kaccāyana clan was one of the oldest and most respected Brāhmin clans they were very well-known and respected. They had a son whom they named Kāncana (one with golden hue) because of his unusually golden skin. Kāncana studied the Brahmanic Vedas and when he came of age replaced his father as court chaplain.

The king whom he served was known as Candapajjota, or ‘Pajjota the Violent’ due to his explosive temper. When the king heard that a Blessed One had arisen in the world a desire arose in him to see the Buddha. He requested his chaplain to invite the Buddha to Avanti as his guest. Kancana agreed to invite the Buddha if the King gave him permission to be ordained as a monk.

With the king’s permission Kancana and seven other courtiers left Avanti and set out for Sāvatti, where the Buddha was residing. Inspired by the Buddha’s teaching, all eight attained Arahantship together with the four analytical knowledges and were ordained as monks. Kāncana was known as Kaccāna after ordination. Kaccāna enumerated the scenic beauty of Ujjeni to the Buddha, with the intention of inviting Him to visit Avanti. The Buddha, realizing that Kaccāna was quite capable of inspiring the king, his ministers and townsfolk, asked Kaccāna to return to Avanti with the former courtiers.

On the way back the eight monks stopped overnight at a city

named Telapanāli. In this city lived two beautiful maidens. One was a rich girl who had lost all her hair due to a disease. The other was a girl who had become impoverished after her parents' death. The poor girl, who lived with her former governess, had thick, beautiful, long hair, which was the envy of the rich girl. The rich girl had repeatedly offered to buy the lustrous hair of the poor girl for a considerable amount of money, to make a wig. The poor girl, however, had refused her offer.

When the poor girl saw the serene monks on their alms round there arose a longing in her to offer them a meal. Not having the necessary means, she cut off her hair and sold it to the rich girl. Using the money, she bought the items required to make a delicious meal and prepared food for the eight monks. So great was her devotion and happiness in this gift that the effect of her wholesome deed was instant. Her hair grew back in all its splendour to its original length.

When Kaccāna returned to Avanti, he informed the king of this incident. The king then requested that the girl be brought to Avanti and made her his chief consort. After this incident King Pajjota had great confidence in Kaccāna. Before long Avanti was a single blaze of saffron robes as ministers and townsfolk embraced the Buddha's Teaching and entered the Noble Order. The queen, who was deeply grateful to the elder for her good fortune, built for him a monastery in the Golden Grove Park.

The Buddha used two methods of teaching for His monks. Often he began with a short verse, on which he then elaborated with well-organised examples and similes, and then concluded by linking it back to the opening verse by summarizing the deep contents of His message. At times, however, He gave a short message full of deep meaning, on which He did not elaborate, as He wanted His Sangha to reflect on the message and ascertain its meaning through examination and contemplation. The more spiritually advanced met this challenge with enthusiasm, as it stretched their minds and helped them to grow. But at times the novice monks could not discern the meaning of His words. The novice monks then approached Kaccāna and asked him to explain the Buddha's

words. Kaccāna then elaborated on the teaching and explained it in a manner that was understood by the less advanced members of the Sangha. The Buddha, when informed of Kaccāna's explanation, consistently praised him for his interpretation by saying that He Himself would have given exactly the same answer had the question been put to Him. Because of Kaccāna's analytical, organised mind and his ability to penetrate the Dhamma and then simplify the message in a manner that was easy to understand, the Buddha declared him as foremost among the monks who elaborated on short verses taught by Him. Kaccāna was known as Mahā Kaccāna to distinguish him from other monks who had the same Brahmanic name.

As with the other titles that the Buddha gave to His Sangha, this appointment was not a chance happening. The aspiration and meritorious deeds that led to this appointment were sown many aeons ago at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha. At that time Kaccāna was born to a wealthy family and saw the Padumuttara Buddha appoint a Bhikkhu as foremost among monks who explain in detail short verses declared by Him. Kaccāna was inspired by the Bhikkhu's ability and a strong desire arose in him to strive for a similar title at the time of a future Buddha. Inviting the Buddha and His retinue of monks to his home for a week, he provided them with alms and necessities. He then built a stupa with a seat, which he had inlaid with gold and fitted with a jewelled parasol, for the Buddha Padumuttara.

Kaccāna then prostrated himself respectfully in front of the Buddha and aspired to be the foremost monk who explained in detail short verses declared by a future Buddha. The Buddha Padumuttara, seeing that Kaccāna's aspiration would be fulfilled, prophesied that at the time of the Gotama Buddha, 100,000 aeons into the future, he would be born to a Brāhmin family by the name of Kaccāna and be declared as the monk foremost in explaining in detail the short verses declared by the Buddha Gotama.

The Buddha Padumuttara also made other prophesies about Kaccāna's future births. He declared that as a result of his

meritorious deeds Kaccāna would be the Lord of the Gods for 30 aeons. He would then return to the human world as a world monarch named Pabhassara. Kaccāna continued in samsara performing meritorious deeds and renewing his aspiration until he was reborn as Kāncana in the Kaccāyana clan to fulfil his aspiration.

The text also indicates the origin of his unusually beautiful, golden complexion. Shortly after the Parinibbāna of the Kassapa Buddha (the Buddha who preceded our Gotama Buddha), Kaccāna had donated a golden brick to make a stupa in the name of the Kassapa Buddha and had made a wish to have a golden hue like the gold he had donated whenever he was reborn. This wish had resulted in Kaccāna's skin having an unusually beautiful, golden hue.

Mahā Kaccāna made an invaluable contribution to the preservation of the Dhamma. His lucid explanations of deep subjects have been carefully documented and as such helped not only the contemporaries of the Buddha but following generations. The text documents well his role as a great teacher. His primary role, however, was to elaborate on the statements made by the Buddha. Compared to the other great disciples there are only a few recorded instances where he taught the Dhamma to one person individually. His explanations and teachings are clear and to the point, using an analytical approach as opposed to using similes and examples.

Kaccāna begins with a short utterance of the Buddha. He then goes on to explain in detail its hidden meaning. Eight Suttas found in the Nikāyas, three in the Majjhima Nikāya, three in the Samutta Nikāya and two in the Anguttara Nikāya, are especially noteworthy. There are also in the Nikāyas some teachings which are directly attributed to Mahā Kaccāna. These teachings have a distinctive flavour revealing the mind from which they were born. They are thorough, well-rounded, balanced and meticulous. Often Kaccāna explains the essence of the verse with only a few words.

A few examples of Kaccāna's skill in explaining the deep meaning of the Buddha's words and the Buddha's praise of his

skills follow:

One day when the Buddha was seated in meditation in the Nigrodha park in Kapillavatthu, an arrogant Sākyan named Dandapani approached Him and asked in a discourteous tone, “What does the recluse assert? What does he proclaim?”

The Buddha, realizing well Dandapani’s quarrelsome nature and intention, replied:

“Friend, I assert and proclaim such (a teaching) that one does not quarrel with anyone in the world, with its gods, with its maras and its Brahmas in this generation, with its recluses, Brāhmins, its princes and its people; such that perceptions no more underlie that Brāhmins who abide detached from sensual pleasures, without perplexity, free of worry, free from craving, for any kind of being.”

Majjhima Nikāya

This reply was totally incomprehensible to Dandapani, who left, subdued. One monk who had not understood the meaning of the Buddha’s words inquired as to what exactly the Blessed One’s teaching was whereby one can avoid all quarrels and at the same time be free from the influence of craving.

The Buddha’s deep reply was:

“Bhikkhus, as to the source through which perceptions and notions tinged by mental proliferation beset a person, if nothing is found to delight in, welcome, and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendencies to lust, aversion, views, doubt, conceit, the desire for being, and ignorance; this is the end of reliance on rods and weapons, of quarrels, brawls, disputes, recriminations, malice, and false speech; here these evil, unwholesome states cease without remainder.”

Majjhima Nikāya

The monks, however, could not comprehend the Buddha’s words. As the Buddha had retired to His quarters they did not

want to question Him further. Instead, they approached Mahā Kaccāna and asked him for an explanation.

Mahā Kaccāna first informed them that it was the Buddha to whom they should go, for it was He who could best answer their questions. He reminded the monks that coming to him when the Buddha was present was like seeking heartwood among the branches and leaves of a tree when the trunk was present. Upon being told the circumstances, he explained the words of the Buddha which emanated from the doctrine of dependent origination, as follows:

“Dependent on the eye (and other sense organs), eye-consciousness (and other forms of sense consciousness), occur. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels one perceives. What one perceives one thinks about. What one thinks about one mentally propagates. With what one has mentally propagated as the source, perceptions and notions (conditioning activities) tinged by mental propagation, beset a person with respect to past, future and present forms cognisable through the eye. The same pattern is repeated for each of the sense organs.” The elder then expanded and linked it with the teaching of the Doctrine of Dependent Origination and explained to the monks how everything is conditionally dependent on the preceding condition and ceases with the cessation of the preceding condition.

The Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddekaratta Sutta from the Majjhima Nikāya also illustrates Mahā Kaccāna’s gift in explaining the complex. A Bhikkhu named Samiddhi approached the Buddha and requested Him to dispense the Bhaddekaratta Sutta, which was in general known by memory to all the monks. The Buddha responded by saying:

*“Let not a person revive the past
Or on the future build his hopes,
For the past has been left behind
And the future has not been reached.*

*Instead with insight let him see
Each presently arisen state;*

*Let him know that and be sure of it,
Invincibly, unshakeably.*

*Today the effort must be made;
Tomorrow death may come, who knows?
No bargain with Mortality can
Keep him and his hordes away.*

*But one who dwells thus ardently
Relentlessly by day and night —
It is he the Peaceful Sage has said,
Who has one fortunate attachment.”*

The Buddha then arose and retired to His chambers. Samiddhi did not understand the Buddha’s poem, but he did not want to disturb Him. Approaching Mahā Kaccāna, Samiddhi saluted him respectfully and asked him the meaning of the poem.

After reminding Samiddhi that it was not appropriate that he should come to him when the Buddha was in residence, Kaccāna took the first two lines of the poem and explained them by way of the six sense bases.

Starting with the sense base of the eye, he said, “One revives the past when one recollects the eye and the forms seen in the past, dwelling upon them with desire and lust. One builds up hope on the future when one sets one’s heart to experiencing future sense objects that one has not as yet encountered. One who does not bind himself to desire and lust resulting from past memories of sensory experience and yearnings for future sensory experiences is one who does not revive the past or build up hope on the future. Similarly, one whose mind is shackled by lust to the present sense faculties and their objects is one vanquished in regard to presently arisen states, while one who is not bound by lust to the present sense faculties is called one invincible in regard to presently arisen states. The elder then repeated the above explanation using each of the other sense bases.

In this manner, using simple language, the elder advised the monks not to be attached to sense objects of the past, present

and future. Instead, to strive with insight to observe the impermanence of all phenomena because death could strike anyone at any time. And one could not bargain with death. Mahā Kaccāna thus encouraged Samidhi not to waste a moment but to strive on with diligence to experience insight.

Later, when the monks told the Buddha of Mahā Kaccana's explanation, He praised the elder by saying that if He had been questioned, He too would have answered in the same manner.

Mahā Kaccāna also used his analytical abilities and organization skills to teach the Dhamma. The Majjhima Nikāya has a very interesting dialogue between the elder and King Avantiputta of Madhura, who was the grandson of King Candappajjoti of Avanti. Once when Mahā Kaccāna was residing in Madhura, King Avantiputta, having heard of his fame, approached the elder and questioned him. His question, however, was not a complex question from the higher teaching. It was a topic of importance that was weighing heavily on the Brāhmins who thought that they were the superior ones chosen by Mahā Brahma, their creator God. The noble caste rulers had established their supremacy over the entire Indian nation by claiming that they were the fairest caste, the purified, the sons of Brahma, His offspring – born of Brahma, created by Brahma, heirs of Brahma. At the time of the Buddha, the Brāhmins had succeeded in establishing their supremacy over the whole Indian social system by declaring that those born to the Brāhmin caste, to a Brāhmin family, were the direct descendants of Mahā Brahma, the title given to the creator God. They were the chosen people. They were the undisputed leaders and nobility. The Buddha, however, had denounced the degrading caste system and declared that it was not by birth that one was a Brāhmin (nobleman), but by deeds.

King Avantiputta's question to Mahā Kaccāna, who was from a very old, well-respected, and high-caste Brāhmin family, had far-reaching, significant importance. The king attempted to justify this drive for power by appealing to the divinely ordained status, in keeping with the Brāhmanic beliefs. He questioned the elder, who himself was of pedigreed Brāhmin caste, about the supremacy of the Brāhmins. The Elder then

corrected his false views by saying:

“The claim of the Brāhmins is just a saying in the world – one with no divine sanction at all.” Then, to prove his point further, the elder elaborated on his claim by saying: “Anyone of any social class who gains wealth can command the labour of those of other castes. Even a menial could enrol a Brāhmin in his service. One of any caste who violates the principles of morality could be reborn in hell (Devadatta and King Ajātasattu) while one of any caste who observes the principles of morality and generosity could be reborn in a happy realm (Lāja¹⁹). One of any caste who breaks the law will be punished. One of any caste who renounces the world and becomes an ascetic will receive homage and respect (Sunita and Upali).” The Elder continued to conclude that these four castes (in existence at that time) were all the same, that there was no difference, no divine sanction in them at all.

At the end of the discussion King Avantiputta expressed his appreciation by saying, “I go to Master Mahā Kaccāna for my refuge, I go to the Dhamma for my refuge, I go to the Sangha for my refuge.” Mahā Kaccāna corrected him by saying, “Do not come to me for refuge. Go to the Fully Enlightened One, to whom I too go for refuge. When the king inquired as to the whereabouts of the Buddha, the elder informed him that the Blessed One had already attained Parinibbāna, leading us to the conclusion that this discussion occurred after the passing away of the Buddha.

Not only was Mahā Kaccāna honoured and respected by the Sangha and lay disciples, he was also well-respected and honoured by the gods. Monks usually dispersed to various cities and monasteries for the rainy season. At the end of the rainy season they gathered at an assembly that was held by the Buddha to advise the monks and to admonish them for any indiscretions. Many monks travelled back to wherever the Buddha was residing for this assembly. Mahā Kaccāna was no exception. Often travelling from afar, he ensured that he was present for the after-rains assembly. The other elders,

¹⁹. See the story of Mahā Kassapa (9).

accustomed to seeing Mahā Kaccāna, kept a seat for him in the assembly.



On one such occasion Sakka, the king of the Tāvātimsa

Heaven, together with a large retinue, descended to earth to pay homage and respect to the great disciples. On noticing that Mahā Kaccāna was absent, Sakka thought to himself, “It would be good if the Noble Elder were to arrive so that I can pay respect to him”. Just then Mahā Kaccāna entered the assembly and sat down in the seat prepared for him. Overwhelmed with joy, Sakka dropped to his knees and, grasping the elder’s feet, paid homage to him by bowing low. He then showered him with garlands and incense.

Novice monks were affronted as to why Sakka had singled out Mahā Kaccāna for special homage. The Buddha, however, reproved them by saying that those monks, like Mahā Kaccāna, who guarded the sense doors (to ensure no unwholesome deeds were performed), were beloved by both gods and humans. He then declared:

*“Even the Devas hold him dear,
Whose senses are subdued.
Like horses trained well by a charioteer,
Whose pride is destroyed,
And who is free from corruptions.”*

Dhammapada 94

In this manner the Buddha assured His disciples that one did not have to resort to prayers to obtain favours from the gods. The Devas enjoyed favouring and honouring those who practised the virtues and kept the precepts of morality.

Mahā Kaccāna assisted many novice monks and lay devotees to understand the complex teachings. His keen mind, analytical abilities, and organizational skills helped many of the less spiritually advanced to grasp the deep teachings of the Buddha. Mahā Kaccāna was declared by the Buddha to be foremost among the monks who explained in detail brief statements proclaimed by the Buddha.



CHAPTER 12

Bakkula

At the time of the Gotama Buddha, in the city of Kosabhe, there lived a wealthy, high-caste merchant and his wife. After some time the wife conceived and the couple was blessed with a beautiful baby son on whom they lavished all their love and affection. As they lived close to the river Yamuna, the baby was taken to the river by his nurse for his daily bath.

The river Yamuna was a deep, wide river with shallow banks and swiftly-flowing water. The nurse was bathing the young baby when she was terrified by a large fish that was swimming towards her. In her haste to get out of the water she lost the baby. Wading into the river she tried to swim after the precious child. The current, however, was swift. She watched in horror as the child was taken further and further from her reach, towards the large fish.

Many miles down the river was a fishing village. The men who fished in the Yamuna river were excited, for their nets had drawn a very large fish. Hauling in their nets with difficulty, they took the large fish which was thrashing about to the home of the wealthiest resident, who had a large household with many servants. Knowing that only the rich could afford such a large fish they sold it to the merchant, who had no children. The fish was taken to the kitchen, but the cook was reluctant to cut the unusually large and beautiful fish. Deciding to serve it whole, he carefully opened it by inserting his knife along its side. The cook was greatly surprised to find a young baby, still

alive, in the stomach of the fish²⁰. Running to his mistress, he handed the beautiful baby to her. The woman, who had no children, was filled with joy at the sight of the baby, and decided to bring him up as her own.

The unusual story of the child's beginning soon spread throughout the village. Many came to see the beautiful baby who was regarded as a miracle child. Before long the news spread upriver to the grieving parents who were still in deep sorrow due to the loss of their son. Suspecting that it could be their child, they visited the fishing village to examine the baby. Recognizing the baby as her own, the birth mother asked for the custody of her child. However, the new mother, who had brought up the child with love, was too attached to the baby to part with it. Unable to settle the dispute on their own, the two families took their grievance to the king. The king heard both sides of the story and gave both families joint custody of the child, who was renamed Bakkula meaning 'two castes'. Bakkula had the unique privilege of claiming lineage from two very wealthy, high-caste Brahmin families. He grew up in the midst of extreme luxury and love from both sets of parents. He had the best available education and took turns living with both sets of parents. As he came of age his parents arranged a marriage to a beautiful girl.

The aspiration made many eons ago had to be fulfilled. As he grew older Bakkula was inspired by the teachings of the Gotama Buddha. He decided to join the Buddha's Noble Order. Eight days later he attained the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

²⁰. Though many feel that this story is a legend resulting from the poetic embellishment of authors and that in truth the child was swept downriver to be found by fishermen, the ancient text draws attention to this remarkable event. The text claims that the miracle of surviving in the stomach of a large fish was only possible because of the child's aspiration at the time of the Anomadassi Buddha, renewal of the aspiration under subsequent Buddhas, and the meritorious deeds that were performed over eons of time to ensure good health and longevity.



The monks soon noticed a strange phenomenon regarding

Bakkula. Not only was he as knowledgeable as any physician, he was also exceptionally healthy, never succumbing to sickness despite the fact that he often tended the sick monks. Bakkula was also well-known for his remarkable memory. Similarly to the chief disciples of the Buddha, Sāriputta and Moggallāna and his former wife, Yasodarā, Bakkula could recall his past births over infinite periods of time.

The Buddha appointed Bakkula as the monk foremost in good health and longevity. Bakkula entered the noble order at the age of eighty and led the life of a householder for eighty years and the life of a monk for 80 years²¹. To understand the cause of his remarkable memory and his longevity one needs to go back many, many years into the past.

One hundred thousand world cycles and one infinite period ago,²² a Supreme Buddha named Anomadassi reigned over India. Having realized the timeless Four Noble Truths and the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, the Anomadassi Buddha, together with His Chief Disciples, Nisabha and Anoma, taught the Buddha Dhamma for the benefit of mankind and gods. The Anomadassi Buddha, who was travelling through villages and

²¹. It is commonly said that Bakkula used his remarkable memory and longevity for the accurate preservation of the Word of the Buddha. He lived to the age of 160 years and is said to have been in attendance at both the First and Second Sangha Council. If so he would have assisted Ananda's pupil, Sabbakāmi, in preserving the Word of the Buddha accurately. Documentation to support this, however, could not be found in the Second Sangha Council. As youths married at about 16 years of age it is possible that Bakkula would have fulfilled his family obligations and joined the Noble Order before age sixty. Despite the unavailability of documentation this version could be accurate as ordination at age eighty was uncommon.

²². Read *Practising the Dhamma with a view to Nibbana* by Radhika Abeysekera for a comprehensive understanding of the terms *world cycle* and *incalculable* or *infinite period*. The measurements or calculations are based on the time span between Supreme Buddhas. When the era between Buddhas exceeded the quantifiable number in use at the time of the Gotama Buddha, it was known as an infinite period.

cities preaching the Dhamma, was in a monastery in a beautiful grove of flowering trees near a huge rock formation known as Sobitha when he was stricken with grave illness. Enduring His pain and discomfort with the strength of His mind, the Anomadassi Buddha continued His noble mission of helping mankind eradicate all suffering by showing them the path to emancipation.

At this time a young man who was skilled in his studies, not content with his education, turned to searching for truth. Giving up his household life he took to the life of an ascetic. Before long he attained the mental ecstasies (Jhana). Inspired by the teachings of the Anomadassi Buddha, he entered the Noble Order. However, despite his effort he did not attain enlightenment. Seeing the Buddha Anomadassi and diagnosing His illness, the young monk requested permission to treat His ailment. He then combed the area, obtained the necessary herbs and roots, and prepared the medicine required for treatment. Offering the medicine to the Anomadassi Buddha with devotion and compassion, he tended to the Buddha's needs and restored Him back to health. He then aspired for long life and good health in all his future births in samsara (cycle of birth and death). Realizing that he required more effort and meritorious deeds to attain emancipation, he continued to perform meritorious deeds.

The Anomadassi Buddha looked into the future and prophesied that the young monk would be reborn in the Brahma realms for many world cycles, after which he would return to the human world as a royal monarch. He would then enjoy the comforts of a royal monarch for many births. Throughout his birth in the celestial and human realms he would be blessed with long life and exceptionally good health.

Bakkula's next documented birth is during the reign of the Padumuttara Buddha. He was inspired by a monk on whom the Padumuttara Buddha had conferred the title of monk foremost in long life and good health. He performed many meritorious deeds and aspired to be foremost in long life and good health under a future Buddha. The Padumuttara Buddha prophesied that many eons into the future there would reign a Supreme

Buddha of the Sakyan clan by the name of Gotama. At this time, Bakkula would be born into a wealthy Brahmin family, attain the supreme bliss of Nibbāna, and be declared the monk foremost in good health and longevity.

The next documented birth story is at the time of the Vipassi Buddha, when Bakkula was born in the city of Bandumatti. On completing his education he decided to join the Noble Order. Before long he attained the mental ecstasies. During this time a contagious disease spread among the Vipassi Buddha's Noble Order. By using his supernormal powers Bakkula gathered the herbs and roots required and prepared the medicine that cured the Sangha. He then renewed his aspiration. At death he was reborn in the Brahma realms and had the opportunity to enjoy celestial bliss for a long period of time.

The next documented birth story is at the time of the Kassapa Buddha. After seeing a derelict monastery he repaired it and offered it to the Sangha. Taking refuge in the Kassapa Buddha he continued his efforts at emancipation. At death he was reborn in the heavens.

As prophesied, the aspiration made at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha was fulfilled during the reign of the Gotama Buddha. Bakkula, with his remarkable memory and the experience gained by attending the First Sangha Council was invaluable in teaching and assisting the Sangha in preserving the Word of the Buddha.



CHAPTER 13

Sivali

At the time of the Buddha Gotama there reigned a righteous King and Queen named Koliya and Suppavāsā. After some time Queen Suppavāsā conceived a child. The unborn child brought great fortune to the kingdom. Not only did the queen receive many gifts from friends and relatives, but the whole kingdom became prosperous. Crops grew in abundance and everyone was well-fed and healthy.

The queen grew heavy with child but when the natural time for the birth arrived, she failed to deliver the baby. She grew uneasy as time passed by with still no signs of the birth, and asked the King to invite the Buddha and His retinue of monks for a meal. After the meal the Buddha blessed the queen by saying:

*“May Suppavāsā, daughter of the Koliya clan,
Be happy and healthy and give birth to a healthy son.”*

After the Buddha left, the queen gave birth to a beautiful, healthy son. As a mark of respect for the Buddha, who had eased the queen’s heavy burden with His blessings, He and His retinue were invited to receive alms at the palace for seven days. The prince was named Sivali, as from the time of his conception, the people’s hardships were alleviated through an abundance of rich crops.

One day when Sāriputta was on his alms round he visited the prince and informed him of the suffering that he and his mother

had undergone because of the delayed pregnancy. Sāriputta then went on to explain to the prince the unwholesome action that his mother and he had performed and the resulting effects of their actions.

In a previous birth Sivali had been born as the King of Benares and had waged war on a neighbouring kingdom. He had surrounded the kingdom and told the citizens to surrender or fight back. When they refused to surrender, in collaboration with his consort, his present mother, he had decided to surround the city and hold them hostage until they did so. The citizens, who did not want to fight back or live under the rule of such a king, had not surrendered. As a result they had suffered greatly without food for a very long period. Many of the sick and the elderly had died but the arrogant king and his queen had not given in. Many months later the King had withdrawn his troops and released his hostages but he had paid dearly for the suffering he had caused. At death he was reborn in Avichi hell. The delayed pregnancy and the suffering he and his mother had undergone resulting from the delay were the residual effects of this action.

After illustrating the Noble Truth of suffering, Sāriputta asked the prince if he would like to join the Noble Order so that he could seek the path to end all suffering. The prince was overjoyed at this invitation and agreed to join the order with his mother's permission.

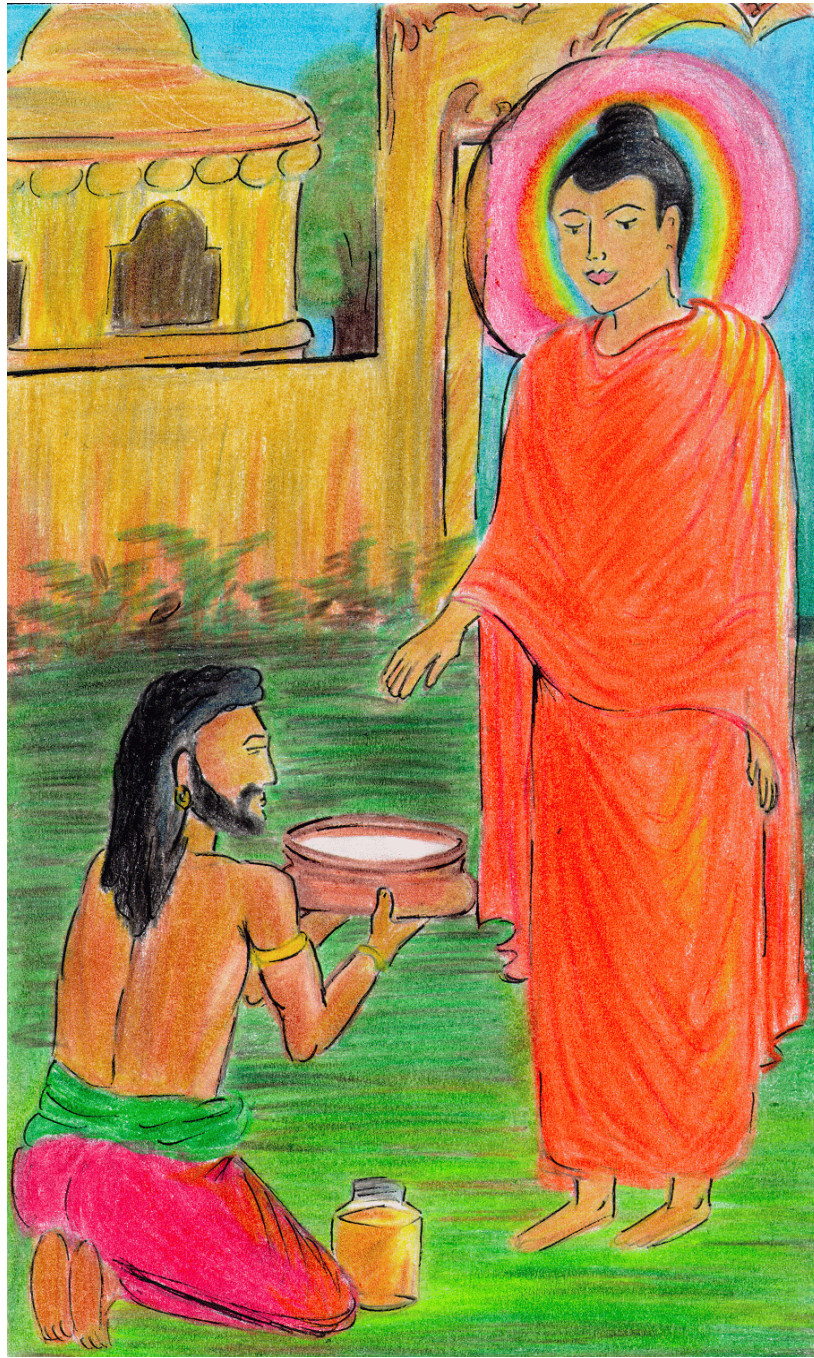
The queen, who was a devoted follower of the Buddha, agreed. She escorted Prince Sivali in procession to the monastery to be ordained. On the day of ordination when his hair was shaved, Sāriputta advised Sivali to meditate on the impurities of the body. Sivali, who was spiritually advanced resulting from previous wholesome actions, focused his mind as instructed. Before the completion of the shaving of his hair, Sivali attained the supreme wisdom of Nibbāna.

The monks soon noticed a strange phenomenon when they were with Sivali. Sivali always seemed to have an abundance of rich, fragrant food and the other requisites (robes, shelter and medicine). Monks who were with him also had the opportunity

to share in the bounty. Wherever Sivali went people flocked around to prepare food for him. Sivali was indeed blessed with all the requisites of a monk.

And so it was that wherever Sivali travelled he was well taken care of. He and his retinue of 500 monks were in an uninhabited forest for seven days, but they were not short of food. The Devas made sure that all their requirements were met. Similarly when Sivali was travelling through the desert his requisites were provided. The Buddha, seeing that Sivali was fulfilling a previous aspiration in His reign, declared that he was foremost among the monks in obtaining requisites. He also instructed monks who were travelling on long, tedious journeys through uninhabited terrain to be accompanied by Sivali, as with him by their side they would be ensured of the requisites. In fact, on one occasion when the Buddha and His retinue of 30,000 monks were travelling to visit the monk Khadhiravaniya Revata (Sāriputta's younger brother) they had to cross an uninhabited forest. Ānanda, fearing that they would not be able to obtain food in the jungle for such a large number of monks, questioned the Buddha about the logistics of the journey. The Buddha assured Ānanda that they had nothing to worry about as Sivali was with them. With Sivali present there would be no shortage of food because even the Devas revelled in taking care of his requirements.

In general the effects of one's wholesome and unwholesome intentional actions are reaped only by the doer. However, there are instances, as with Sivali, that others too benefit from unusually strong actions of another. This overflow of the results of the effect of a persons strong kamma on others is known as nissandha pala (overflowing results of kamma). While vipaka pala (results of kamma) are reaped only by the doer nissandha pala are experienced by others who happen to be with you. Nissandha pala could be both wholesome and unwholesome in accordance with the deed performed. For instance Sāriputta did not obtain alms in one instance resulting from the nissandha pala of Losaka's strong unwholesome deeds.



To seek the cause of this strange phenomenon we need to go back many aeons to the time of the Buddha Padumuttara. Sivali, who had been born as a poor man, had the opportunity to see the Buddha Padumuttara confer on another monk the honour of being foremost among monks who obtain the requisites. Fascinated by the way everyone desired to provide alms and robes to this monk, Sivali had decided that he too would like to hold a similar position in a future birth. He had then performed many acts of generosity to the Buddha Padumuttara and His retinue and made an aspiration.

The Buddha Padumuttara, foreseeing that Sivali's aspiration would be fulfilled, had prophesied that at the time of the Gotama Buddha he would be foremost among the monks who obtained requisites. From this point onwards, Sivali had started in earnest to work toward his aspiration. At death he was reborn in a heavenly realm where he enjoyed many years of heavenly bliss.

The next documented birth story took place at the time of the Buddha Vipassi, 91 world cycles before our Gotama Buddha. Sivali was born as a merchant in the City of Bandhumati. The City was preparing a great alms-giving for the Buddha Vipassi and His retinue of monks, when they realized that they were short of curd and honey, a delicacy that was often served after the noonday meal. Messages were sent all over the city to obtain the required delicacy. Unable to obtain the quota required, the king's men raised the price of the curd and honey from one gold coin to 100 coins.

In the meantime Sivali, a merchant who sold curd and honey, was approached and offered 100 gold coins for his merchandise. Sivali was surprised at the unusually high offer and asked for whose consumption they were buying the curd. On being told that it was for the Buddha Vipassi and His retinue of monks, Sivali asked permission to donate his wares to the Buddha. He then renewed his aspiration to be foremost among the monks who received requisites. The Buddha Vipassi, seeing that Sivali's aspiration would be fulfilled, blessed him by saying, "May your aspiration be fulfilled." Sivali then became a devotee of the Vipassi Buddha and

practised His Dhamma.

Resulting from this strong aspiration and the meritorious deeds and efforts performed in previous births, Sivali fulfilled his aspiration to be foremost among the monks who obtained requisites at the time of the Gotama Buddha. To date, Buddhists venerate the Arahant Sivali, and often keep a picture or a discourse known as the Sivali Paritta in their home as a symbol of abundance of food and prosperity.



CHAPTER 14

Angulimāla

One of King Pasenadi Kosala's subjects was a learned Brāhmin by the name of Bhaggava Gagga, who served as his royal chaplain. Bhaggava and his wife Mantāni had a baby son. In keeping with the custom of the times his father cast a horoscope for the new-born babe. To his horror, he found that the baby was born under the "robber constellation", which would result in tendencies of a life of crime.

That morning when the chaplain visited the king and asked him how he had slept, the king informed him that he had had a night of terror. "I woke up in the night", said the king, "and saw my weapons which were lying at the side of my bed sparkling brightly. Could this", he asked, "mean danger to my kingdom or myself?"

Bhaggava then informed the king that the same strange phenomena had occurred throughout the city and informed the king that the cause was his newborn son who had a robber's horoscope. The king then asked Bhaggava if the stars foretold that the boy was to be a lone robber. Bhaggava informed the king that indeed the stars foretold that his son would lead a life of solitary crime. Bhaggava then asked the king if they should kill the baby now to prevent the crimes that would be unleashed in the future if this baby lived. King Pasenadi, reflecting on the fact that the child would grow up to be a lone robber, asked his chaplain to bring him up carefully and to educate him well so that this prediction could be avoided.

Bhaggava and Mantāni decided to name the baby Ahimsaka, or

“harmless”, in the hope that his name and a good upbringing and education would change the latent tendencies that were dormant in him. Ahimsaka grew up to be physically strong, intelligent and well-behaved. As he excelled in his studies his father sent him to Takkasilā, the famous ancient university of India, for his higher education. Ahimsaka, who was a good student, soon surpassed all the other students and excelled. Before long he was the favourite of his teacher. His teacher treated him as his son and often invited Ahimsaka to share meals with him in his home. Ahimsaka’s academic excellence and his obvious friendship with the teacher made him many enemies. His fellow students, jealous of his success, decided to poison the teacher’s mind in order to destroy the friendship.

They began systematically to poison the mind of the teacher by making false accusations against Ahimsaka. At first the teacher disregarded their slander and rebuked them, but when more and more students independently came to him with the same story his confidence wavered. Slowly a seed of doubt entered his heart. Was Ahimsaka plotting against him? Was he planning to take over his pupils and surpass him? His teacher decided that he would have to kill Ahimsaka before he himself was killed. But Ahimsaka was big and strong. Killing him would not be easy. Besides, his reputation as a teacher would be ruined if he were in any way connected with Ahimsaka’s death. The teacher reflected on a plan to get rid of Ahimsaka, whom he now perceived as a threat, in a manner that would not incriminate him.

Ahimsaka had just completed his course of studies. It was the custom at that time for the pupils to give a gift to honour the teacher who had taught them. Reminding Ahimsaka of this honoured custom, he requested a necklace of one thousand fingers, each of which was to be obtained from a different person’s body. The teacher most probably had secretly cast Ahimsaka’s horoscope himself, for this science was well-known at that time, and had seen that Ahimsaka had within him criminal tendencies. He also expected that before long Ahimsaka would be caught by the king’s men and executed for his crimes. Thus, thinking that he had come up with a foolproof plan to kill Ahimsaka, he insisted on his gift when Ahimsaka hesitated.

Ahimsaka came from a family who believed in non-violence. Remembering his parental and family values, Ahimsaka refused to provide this gift. But the teacher insisted by telling him that this was expected of him and that not giving the requested gift would totally nullify the value of all he had learned, as he would not have met the honoured teacher's wish. Ahimsaka therefore felt compelled to agree.

At this point Ahimsaka's latent tendencies for violence arose and exploded within him. In previous births he had been strong and violent. He had, in fact, eaten human flesh and relished killing. His dark past and lack of compassion resurfaced and the good influence of his parents and upbringing were forgotten. His love for danger, adventure and killing took over. Instead of collecting the thousand fingers from dead bodies, which could have been found in the burial grounds, he took to a life of crime in the Jālini forest in his home state of Kosala.

There he lived on a high cliff, observing travellers upon whom he swooped down and killed. Slaying them, he took one finger from each victim. First he hung the finger on a tree so that birds and other creatures would eat the rotting flesh and then he threaded the bones into a garland which he wore round his neck. Before long he came to be known as Angulimāla, or "garland of fingers".

The whole city was in terror. Angulimāla's power and strength were unconquerable. Many had tried to capture the dreaded serial killer but had fallen victim to his vicious strength and inhuman cruelty. Angulimāla began to enjoy his cruel life and was completely overtaken by his past dark life of killing and cruelty. No one dared to approach the forest for fear of death. Angulimāla started to venture into the outskirts of the city to find his victims. He even started breaking into homes and raiding the city in the night to kill and obtain the fingers. The villagers, who were petrified, left their homes and fled to the capital of Sāvatti. They camped outside the palace walls and complained to the king that more and more of the townspeople were being killed mercilessly by Angulimāla. The king therefore prepared the army to capture him.



At this time Angulimāla had collected 999 of the thousand

fingers required for his gift to the teacher. Angulimāla's true name and descent were not known, as his appearance had changed. His beard and hair were matted and he was covered in stale, dried blood. The stench of death and raw meat surrounded him. He looked like a wild, fearsome killer. The mild-mannered Ahimsaka was unrecognizable.

News of the terror wrought by Angulimāla had finally reached his parents. Suspecting that Angulimāla was their son who had never come back from the Takkasilā University, his mother pleaded with her husband to bring their son back. But Bhaggavā had no use for such a son. He refused, saying, "Let him be captured, let him be executed by the king's men". Mantāni decided to venture into the forest alone to save her son. With the unconditional love that a mother has for her child she hoped to persuade Angulimāla to mend his ways, as the king was preparing his army to capture and execute him.

Angulimāla was searching desperately for his last victim. He was tiring of his life of crime and had become eager to reach his goal. In the distance he saw a woman approaching his hide-out in the Jālini forest. Swooping down the mountain, he began chasing the old woman whom he soon realized was his mother.

At this time the Buddha, with his compassionate eye, was observing the world, looking for those with wisdom and in need to help. He saw Angulimāla running after his mother for his final kill. He also saw that Angulimāla had within him the goodness to attain emancipation. This was not His first encounter with Angulimāla. In many past lives they had met and the Buddha had conquered Angulimāla's strength of body with His strength of mind. Once Angulimāla had even been the Bodhisatta's uncle (Jātaka 513). He walked toward the Jālini forest to prevent the grave, hideous crime of matricide. Townsfolk tried to prevent the Buddha from continuing by telling Him of the murderous serial killer.

The Buddha, disregarding their plea, ventured into the deep forest. Projecting himself between Angulimāla and his mother, the Buddha attracted his attention. Seeing the calm and serene Buddha, Angulimāla swerved. "Why should I kill my mother,"

thought Angulimāla, “my last victim will instead be this ascetic who stands calmly in my way”.

Swerving, he started after the Buddha. Angulimāla brandished his sword as he thrashed amongst the foliage, intent on catching up with the Buddha. But despite his superhuman strength and fast pace he could not keep up with the Buddha. The Buddha did not seem to be running and yet, despite Angulimāla’s efforts, He remained a few paces ahead. Exhausted, Angulimāla called out to the Buddha, “Stop, recluse! Stop, recluse!” The Buddha calmly replied, “I have stopped, Angulimāla. You too should stop.”

Angulimāla was perplexed by the Buddha’s words. Stopping, he questioned the Buddha as to what He meant. The Buddha then explained:

*“Angulimāla, I have stopped forever,
I abstain from violence towards all living beings
But you have no restraint towards things that breathe
So that is why I have stopped and you have not.”*

When Angulimāla heard these words a miraculous change occurred. His former good deeds and purity surfaced. He knew that the Compassionate One had come to the Jālini Forest solely on his behalf. Moved to the very core of his being, Angulimāla threw down his sword, knelt before the Buddha with bowed head, and pledged to change.

*“Oh at long last this Recluse, a Venerated Sage,
Has come to this forest for my sake.
Having heard your stanza, teaching me the Truth (Dhamma)
I will indeed renounce evil forever.”*

The Buddha ordained Angulimāla and took him back to the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti. The villagers, unaware of the transformation that had taken place, continued to complain to the king, who, together with his best soldiers, set off to the Jālini forest to capture Angulimāla. On the way they passed the Jetavana Monastery. Being an ardent follower of the Enlightened One, King Pasenadi Kosala stopped at the

monastery to pay respect to the Buddha. The Buddha, seeing the king in his battle gear with his best soldiers, asked him if he was going to war with a neighbouring kingdom. King Pasenadi replied that it was not a kingdom that he was trying to overthrow, but Angulimāla, the dreaded murderer. He then added that even though he had selected his best soldiers to accompany him, he did not think that he would be successful in capturing the fierce murderer.

The Buddha then asked the king how he would treat Angulimāla if he had given up his murderous ways and taken to the Noble Order. The king replied that he would then honour and worship him as befitting the Noble Ones. The Buddha then asked Angulimāla to come forward. A calm and serene, shaven monk walked towards the king. At the sight of Angulimāla the king shook with fear. His being with the Buddha and wearing saffron robes did not alter the fact that he was a fearsome killer. The king backed away in terror.

The Buddha then told the king that he had nothing to be afraid of, as Angulimāla had given up killing to follow His path. The king then questioned Angulimāla about his family and origin. Angulimāla answered that he was the son of Bhaggava Gagga and Mantāni. The king immediately recalled the day that Angulimāla was born and the unusual happening in the night. But confident in the Buddha's acceptance of the former murderer, the king addressed him as Gagga Mantāniputta so that his association with the past should be forgotten. King Pasenadi offered to provide Mantāniputta (son of Mantāni) his patronage and the requisites of a monk. Mantāniputta, however, had decided that he would practise austerities. He already had the three robes that a monk required. He refused the king's offer. Amazed at the transformation, King Pasenadi then praised the Buddha as follows:

“It is wonderful, Venerable Sir. It is marvellous how the Blessed One subdues the unsubdued, pacifies the unpacified, calms the uncalm. This one whom we could not subdue with punishment and weapons, the Blessed One has subdued without punishment or weapons.”

Despite the king's acceptance of Mantāniputta the townsfolk feared the former killer. When Mantāniputta went on his alms round people ran away in fear. Even though he went on alms round each day, as it was the custom for the Buddha's monks to do, he hardly ever received alms. The villagers were also in fear that this precedent would result in seasoned criminals joining the Noble Order to escape from their punishment. Reflecting on their concern the Buddha realized that no one but Himself had the capacity to look into a person and view their innate goodness. There could in the future arise a misuse of the Noble Order by evil persons. Agreeing to their request, the Buddha declared that convicted criminals would not be allowed to join the order as a means to escape their punishment or jail term.

Mantāniputta, who practised the Buddha's teaching ardently, had difficulties attaining his goal. Visions of his former victims pleading for their life, their cries of pain and torment, haunted him. He could not calm his mind or collect his thoughts when he remembered his evil past. He continued striving, and despite the fact that he did not receive alms, he joined the other monks in the daily alms round. On one such day he saw a woman in labour in intense pain, as she was unable to deliver her baby. Full of compassion for her suffering he went back to the Buddha and asked if there was anything that he could do to help the young woman.

The Buddha then declared a stanza of Truth which is now commonly known as the Angulimāla Sutta. The Buddha asked him to go to the woman and say the following:

*“Since I was with the Noble Birth,
I do not recall that I have ever intentionally
Deprived a living being of his life.
By this Truth may you be well and may your infant be safe.”*

As instructed Mantāniputta went back to the woman's home. He then declared the Sutta. The woman's suffering ceased and she gave birth to a healthy baby. The power of Truth and the resulting miracle spread across the city. Villagers lost their fear of Mantāniputta and started to accept him with compassion. He

started to receive food when he went on his alms round.

The Buddha did not usually encourage His disciples to perform miracles or to heal through faith. Why then in this incident did He encourage Mantāniputta to help the woman through the power of Truth? It was because the Buddha knew that Mantāniputta did not receive any alms because the villagers did not have confidence in him. It was also to give Mantāniputta something positive on which to focus his mind so that he could put aside his past and concentrate on disciplining his mind. After this incident people started slowly to regain their confidence in Mantāniputta. He too was able to concentrate without constantly reliving his evil past. His compassion for the woman and his happiness resulting from this deed helped to calm his mind. Shortly thereafter, with diligent practice, Mantāniputta, the former murderer Angulimāla, attained Arahantship.

The acceptance, however, was not complete. Many whose family members he had killed never forgave him. They hit him with sticks and stones and Mantāniputta often came back to Jetavana bleeding, in torn robes. He bore the torment with calm for he had finally attained his salvation. His body was subject to the brutal attacks for he had to reap the effects of his evil kamma, but his mind had achieved liberation.

To this day Buddhists all over the world have great confidence in the Angulimāla Sutta. It is common practice for the Sutta to be used for a safe and comfortable delivery when Buddhist women are in labour. From this point onwards Mantāniputta's compassion spread. He led a quiet life, living in forests and glades, practising austerities.

Mantāniputta encourages his enemies and others who have done wrong and describes his transformation and gratitude to the Buddha thus:

*“(one)Who once did live in negligence
And then in negligence no more.
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from the clouds.*

*(One)Who checks the evil deeds he did
By doing wholesome deeds instead
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from the clouds.*

*The youthful Bhikkhu who devotes
His efforts to the Buddha’s teachings
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from the clouds.*

*Let my enemies but hear discourses from the Dhamma
Let them be devoted to the Buddha’s Teaching
Let my enemies wait on these good people
Who lead others to accept the Dhamma (Truth).*

*Let my enemies give ear from time to time
And hear the doctrine as told by men who preach forbearance
Of those who speak as well in praise of kindness
And let them follow up the Teaching with kind deeds.*

*For surely then they will not wish to harm me
Nor would they think of harming other beings
So those who would protect beings frail or strong
Let them attain the all-surpassing peace.*

*Conduit-makers guide the water
Fletchers straighten arrows
Carpenters straighten out the timber
But wise men seek to tame themselves.*

*There are some that tame with beatings
Some with goads and some with whips
But I was tamed by such alone
Who has neither rod nor any weapon.*

*Harmless is the name I bear
Who was dangerous in the past
The name I bear today is true
I hurt no living beings at all.*

*And though I once lived as a bandit
With the name of Finger Garland
One whom the great flood swept along
I went for refuge to the Buddha.*

*And though I once was bloody-handed
With the name of Finger Garland
See the refuge I have found
The bond of being has been cut.*

*While I did many deeds that lead
To rebirth in the evil realms
Yet their result has reached me now
And so I eat free from death.*

*They are fools and have no sense
Who give themselves to negligence
But those of wisdom guard diligence
And treat it as their greatest good.*

*Do not give way to negligence
Nor seek delight in sensual pleasures
But meditate with diligence
So as to reach the perfect bliss.*

*So welcome to that choice of mind
And let it stand, it was not ill made
Of all the Dhammas known to men
I have come to the very best.*

*So welcome to that choice of mind
And let it stand, it was not ill made
I have attained the triple knowledge
And done all that the Buddha teaches.*

I stayed in forests at the root of a tree

*I dwelt in the mountain caves
But no matter where I went
I always had an agitated heart.*

*But now I rest and rise in happiness
And happily I spend my life
For now I am free of Mara's snares
Oh! For the pity shown me by the Master.*

*A Brāhmin was I by descent
On both sides high and purely born
Today I am the Master's son
My teacher is the Dhamma-King.*

*Free of craving, without grasping
With guarded senses, well restrained
Spawn forth have I the root of misery
The end of all taints have I attained.*

*The Master has been served by me full well
And all the Buddha's bidding has been done
The heavy load was finally laid down
What leads to new becoming was cut off.*

Therigāthā 871-891



Chapter 15

Nanda

Nanda was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mahā Pajāpati Gotami. He was the step-brother of Prince Siddhattha. Nanda was celebrating three important events on the day that the Buddha visited the palace for His noonday meal. He was celebrating his consecration to the throne, his marriage to Janapada Kalyāni, and his housewarming ceremony.

After the meal the Buddha handed His bowl to Nanda and left the palace to return to the monastery. Out of respect for the Buddha, Nanda followed Him with bowl in hand, thinking, “Surely the Lord will take the bowl from me shortly.”

The Buddha, however, did not take back the bowl. Nanda, who respected His older brother, the Buddha, followed Him to the monastery. His betrothed, seeing him following the Buddha, ran after him in tears, saying, “Return quickly, O Noble Lord.” These affectionate words and his beloved’s tears moved Nanda deeply. But so great was his reverence for the Buddha that he could not hand back the bowl.

On reaching the monastery the Buddha, who saw that Nanda had the potential of reaching Arahantship, asked him if he would like to be ordained as a monk. Nanda was torn. He wanted to go back to his betrothed. But how could he refuse the Buddha? So great was his respect for his older brother, the Buddha, that he reluctantly agreed.



Nanda, the Bhikkhu, was not happy. He kept thinking of his

bride-to-be. Finally, in desperation, he approached his fellow monks and related his troubles to them. Nanda informed them that he intended to give up the holy life and go back to the life of a householder.

The news of Nanda's decision soon reached the Buddha. Approaching Nanda, the Buddha questioned him as to the problem. Nanda informed the Buddha that he was distracted and worried because he had left his beautiful bride on their wedding day. The Buddha, who with His divine eye saw that Nanda, with a little effort, could reach the supreme happiness of enlightenment, thought of a way to keep him in the Holy Life which was in keeping with his present frame of mind.

Using His psychic powers the Buddha transported Nanda to the Tāvātimsa Heaven. On the way He showed Nanda a singed female monkey who had lost her ears, nose and tail in a forest fire. Pointing to the celestial nymphs the Buddha asked Nanda who was the fairer, the celestial nymphs or his bride-to-be. Nanda, enticed by the extraordinary beauty of the celestial nymphs, replied that his bride-to-be was like the singed female monkey that they had seen on their way, when compared to the celestial nymphs.

The Buddha, reading his immature mind, then said, "I guarantee that you will possess the celestial nymphs if you persevere and follow my instruction." Nanda, who was totally obsessed with the beauty of the celestial nymphs, childishly agreed.

Nanda then informed his fellow monks of his decision to remain in the Holy order and the reason for his change of mind. Before long everybody knew that Nanda was following the Holy Order in the hope of possessing celestial nymphs. The young monks laughed and teased Nanda, calling him rude names. Their teasing brought Nanda to his senses. Ashamed of his base motives he set his mind towards enlightenment. Shortly after, by practising with diligence, Nanda achieved Arahantship. Nanda describes his attachment, final deliverance and gratitude as follows:

*“Because of unreasoned thinking,
I was addicted to ornament.
I was conceited, vain
And afflicted by desire for sense pleasures.*

*With (the aid of) the Buddha
Skilled in means, kinsman of the sun
I practised properly,
Plucked out my mind (desire)
For existence.”*

Theragāthā 157,158

On realizing the exquisite happiness of Nibbāna, Nanda approached the Buddha and thanked Him respectfully by saying, “Lord I release you from your promise of celestial bliss.” The Buddha then informed Nanda that He had been released from the promise the moment he had reached the supreme bliss of Nibbāna, because the bliss of Nibbāna was greater and transcended any celestial bliss.



CHAPTER 16

Vangisa

Vangisa was a Brahmin by birth and is thought to have been so named because he was born in the country of Vanga (Modern Bengal) and was gifted in speech (vangisa - master of speech). He was known in India for his well-developed mental faculties. Prior to his meeting with the Buddha, Vangisa earned his living by tapping on the skulls of deceased persons and informing the relatives and friends of the deceased of the place of rebirth of their loved ones. Recognising Vangisa's spiritual capabilities, the Buddha tested him by presenting him with several skulls, including the skull of an Arahant. Vangisa informed the Buddha accurately of the place of rebirth of all but the Arahant. After several attempts Vangisa gave up, as he could not ascertain the place of rebirth of the Arahant. He decided to enter the Noble Order to find out the mystery regarding the Arahant. He was ordained by the Venerable Nigrodhakappa and, with effort and diligent practice, became an Arahant.

Vangisa's forte, however, was his poetry. The poems themselves give us a picture of a sensitive, artistic man, who found it difficult to control his sensuality and attachment to females. The following poems written by Vangisa describe his struggle to control sense desire:

*“I burn with sensual desire,
my mind is inflamed (with passion).
Out of pity please tell me Gotama (Ānanda)
the effective extinguishing of it.”*

*“Your mind is inflamed because of distorted perception,
shun the aspect of beauty associated with passion.
See construction as other, as painful, not as self,
thus extinguish strong passion, do not burn again and again.*

*Devote the mind one pointed and well composed,
to the contemplation of foulness.
Let mindfulness be directed towards the body
and be full of disenchantment for it.*

*Contemplate the sign less
and cast out the underlying tendency to conceit.
Then by the penetration of conceit
you will go about at peace.”
Theragatha 1223-1226*

*“Alas! now that I have departed from home
to the homeless state
these reckless thoughts from the Dark One
come upon me*

*Mighty warriors, great archers, trained bowmen,
one thousand men might surround me on all sides
Even if more women than these will come
they will not cause me to waiver
for I am firmly established in the teachings.*

*In His presence I heard the Awakened One,
the Kinsman of the Sun.
Of this path leading to Nibbāna,
it is there that my mind is attached.*

*Evil One, while I am living thus,
if you assail me, so shall I act.
O death, that you will not see my path.
Theragatha 1209-1213*



Vangisa was also proud of his gift of poetic excellence but

recognised his pride as something he had to overcome. The following poem displays his struggle to control his conceit prior to attaining enlightenment.

*“Abandon conceit (son of) Gotama,
get rid of the way of conceit completely.
Because of being infatuated by the way of conceit,
for a long time you have been remorseful.*

*Soiled by contempt (for others)
destroyed by conceit, people fall into hell.
Persons destroyed by conceit grieve for a long time
upon being reborn in hell.*

*A monk never grieves who is a knower of the path
One who has practised it properly.
He experiences fame and happiness
Truthfully they call him ‘A Seer of Dhamma’.*

*Therefore be without barrenness,
energetic, purified by abandoning the hindrances.
Having completely abandoned conceit,
be an ender (of suffering) through knowledge
and become one who dwells at peace.”*

Theragatha 1219-1222

Vangisa practised with effort and finally destroyed all passions. He describes his enlightenment as follows:

*“Intoxicated with skill in the poetic art,
formerly we wandered from village to village, from town to
town.*

*Then we saw the Awakened One,
gone to the far shore beyond all (conditioned) phenomena.*

*The Sage gone to the far shore beyond suffering
taught me the Dhamma.
On hearing the Dhamma we gained confidence in Him;
faith arose in us.*

*Having heard His word and learnt of the
aggregates, bases and elements,
I went forth into homelessness.*

*Indeed, Thathāgathas appear for the good of many
men and women who practise their teaching.*

*Indeed the Sage attained enlightenment
for the good of those monks and nuns
who see the course to be undergone.*

*Well taught are the Four Noble Truths
by the Seeing One, the Awakened One, the Kinsman of the Sun,
out of compassion for living beings.*

*Suffering, the origin of suffering,
the overcoming of suffering,
and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the
allaying of suffering.*

*Thus these things, thus spoken of,
have been seen by me as they really are.
The true goal has been reached by me;
the Awakened One's instruction has been done.*

*It was good indeed for me,
coming into the presence of the Awakened One.
Among things shared I obtained the best.*

*I have attained the perfection of the direct knowledge,
I have purified the element of hearing,
I have the threefold knowledge and supernormal powers
I am skilled in knowing the minds of others."*

Theragatha 1253-1262

Vangisa also had the ability to compose lyrical prose
spontaneously and had on one occasion composed this poem in
praise of the Buddha:

*"More than a thousand monks
attend upon the Happy One*

*as He is teaching the stainless Dhamma concerning Nibbāna,
where no fear can come from any quarter.*

*They hear the taintless Dhamma
taught by the Fully Awakened One.
The Awakened One is truly resplendent
as He is revered by the community of monks.*

*You are called a Naga, Fortunate One;
of seers you are the very best;
Like a great raincloud you rain down upon the disciples.*

*Leaving his daytime abode,
wishing to see the Teacher,
your disciple, Vangisa,
pays homage at your feet, Great Hero.”*

Theragatha 1238-1241

The Buddha questioned Vangisa as to whether he had composed the poem beforehand or spontaneously. On being informed that he had composed the poem spontaneously, the Buddha had invited him to compose some more verses. Vangisa then composed the following poem:

*Overcoming the devious ways of mara (death)
He walks (free) having broken
that which make for barrenness of mind.
See Him producing release from bonds,
unattached, separating (mind) into its constituent parts.*

*He has shown the path in a variety of ways
with the aim of guiding us across the flood.
Since the undying has been shown
the Dhamma-seers (Arahanths) stand immovable.*

*The Light Maker, having penetrated (the Dhamma)
saw the overcoming of all standpoints
having understood and experienced it
He taught the most important to the five (monks).*

*When the Dhamma has been thus well taught,
what indolence could there be in those who know the Dhamma?
Therefore, vigilant and ever-revering,
one should follow the training of the Fortunate One.”*

Theragatha 1242-1245

Vangisa’s gratitude and praise of the Buddha was heartfelt. Many of his poems reverence the Buddha as follows:

*“As the moon shines in the sky free from clouds,
as also the spotless sun; even so,
resplendent One, great sage,
do you outshine the world with your fame.”*

Theragatha 1252

Vangisa also respected and praised the Buddha’s great chief disciples, Sariputta and Mahā Moggallāna. He translated his gratitude to prose as follows:

*“Of profound wisdom, intelligent,
skilled in knowledge of the right and wrong path,
Sariputta of great wisdom teaches Dhamma to the monks.*

*He teaches in brief, he speaks with detailed explanation,
his voice is (pleasing) like that of a mynah bird;
he demonstrates readiness of speech.*

*Listening to his sweet utterance
while he is teaching with a voice
that is captivating, pleasing, and lovely
the monks give ear with minds elated and joyful.”*

Theragatha 1231-1233

*“Disciples, possessors of the threefold knowledge
who have left death behind,
attend upon the sage seated on the mountainside
who has gone to the far shore of suffering.*

*Moggallāna of great supernormal powers,
encompasses (their mind) with his mind,
seeking their minds (for those) completely freed,
without attachments.”*

*Thus do they attend upon the great Gotama
endowed with so many virtuous qualities,
the Sage possessed of all the attributes
and gone to the far shore beyond suffering.”*

Theragatha 1249-1251

Even though it was Moggalāna who was endowed with the greatest supernormal powers, Vangisa too was considerably gifted in supernatural powers and mind. Like Moggallāna, he often travelled to the celestial realms and questioned the devas on the wholesome deeds they had done that resulted in rebirth in the heavens. He then came back and reported this to others to encourage them in the performance of wholesome deeds.

The *Vimanavattu* of the *Khuddaka Nikaya* is a collection of 83 stories in verse describing the mansions of heavenly beings and the wholesome deeds performed that resulted in heavenly pleasures. The verses begin with the god or goddess (deva) being asked about the deeds that resulted in such heavenly pleasures. The deva then relates his previous wholesome deeds performed in the human realm that resulted in rebirth in the heavens. Usually the questioning is done by Moggallāna. In four of the stories the questioner is identified as being Vangisa. Vangisa's fame for prose is apparent from the poetic language and beautiful descriptions used in these verses.

The following story from the *Sesavativimāna* (#35) and *Srimāvimāna* (#16) are the most interesting. In them one learns of the extreme benefits of giving alms and reverencing the Pure Ones (Arahanths) and finds a description of how Srīma became a disciple of the Buddha and attained Sottapanna. One also gets a glimpse of the celestial mansions and glories found in the heavens.

Vangisa questions Sesavathi as follows:

“ I see this delightful and beautiful mansion, its surface of many colours ablaze with crystal and roofed with silver and gold. A well-proportioned palace possessing gateways and strewn with golden sand. As the thousand-rayed sun in the autumn shines in the sky in the ten directions, dispelling the darkness, so does this mansion glow like a blazing smoke-crested fire in the darkness of the night.

It dazzles the eye like lightning, beautiful, suspended in space. Resounding with music of lute, drum, and cymbals, this mansion of yours rivals Indra’s city in glory.

White, red and blue lotuses, jasmine and other flowers are there, blossoming sal trees and flowering asokas, and the air is filled with a variety of fragrances.

Sweet-scented trees, breadfruit-laden branches interlaced with palm trees and hanging creepers in full bloom, glorious like jewelled nets; also delightful lotus pools exist in your abode.

Whatever flowering plants there are that grow in water, and trees that are on land, those known in the human world and the heavens, all exist in your abode.

Of what calming and self-restraint is this the result? By the fruit of what deed have you risen here? How did this mansion come to be possessed by you? Tell it in full, O lady with thick eyelashes.”

Sesavathi describes the cause for her good fortune as follows:

“How it came to be possessed by me, this mansion with its flocks of herons, peacocks and partridges, and frequented by heavenly water-fowl and royal geese, resounding with the cries of birds, ducks and cuckoos.

This mansion containing diverse variety of creepers, flowers and trees, with trumpet flowers, rose apple and asoka trees - now how this, mansion came to be possessed by me, I will tell you. Listen, Venerable Sir.

In the eastern region of the excellent country of Magadha there is a village called Nalaka, Venerable Sir. There I have lived formerly as a daughter-in-law and they knew me there as Sesavathi.

Scattering flower-blossoms joyfully I honoured him skilled in deeds and worshipped by gods and men, the great Upatissa (Sāriputta) who has attained the immeasurable quenching (Arahantship). Having worshipped him who has gone to the ultimate, the eminent seer bearing his last body, I came to the heaven of the thirty-three (Tavatimsa) and inhabit this palace.

Vimānavatthu 642-653

On one occasion Vangisa observed the former courtesan, Srīma, descend to earth from the heavens to honour the Buddha. As a deva she was a radiant beauty like a blazing star. Vangisa questions Srīma as to why she has come to reverence the Awakened One and the cause of her good fortune and heavenly birth as follows:

“Your yoke and finely caparisoned horses, strong, swift and heading downward through the sky. And these five hundred chariots magically created are following the horses urged on by their charioteers.

You stand in this excellent chariot, adorned, radiant and shining, like a blazing star. I ask you of lovely slender form and exquisite beauty, from which company of gods have you come to visit the Unrivalled One.”

Srīma answers his question as follows:

“From those who have reached the heights of sensual pleasure, said to be unsurpassed: the gods who delight in magical transformation and creation, a nymph from that company, able to assume any desired appearance have I come to worship the Unrivalled One.”

Vangisa then questions Srīma on the wholesome deeds that

resulted in her good fortune.

“What good conduct did you formerly practise here? How is it that you live in immeasurable glory and have gained such pleasures? Due to what deeds have you acquired the unrivalled power to travel through the sky? Why does your beauty radiate in ten directions?

You are surrounded and honoured by the gods. From where did you de cease before you came to a heavenly birth, goddess? Or of what teaching were you able to follow the word of instruction? Tell me if you were a disciple of the Awakened One.”

Srima replies:

In a fine, well-built city situated between the hills, an attendant of a noble king endowed with good fortune, I was highly accomplished in singing and dancing. As Srima I was known in Rājagaha.

But then the Awakened One, the leader among seers, the guide, taught me of origination, suffering and impermanence. He taught me of the unconditioned, the cessation of suffering that is everlasting, and of this path that is straight and auspicious. When I had learned of the undying state (Nibbana) the unconditioned, through the instruction of the Tathagatha, the Unrivalled One, I was highly and well-restrained in the precepts and established in the Dhamma taught by the most excellent of men, the Awakened One.

When I knew the undefiled place, the unconditioned taught by the Thatāgatha, the Unrivalled One, I then and there experienced the calm concentration (Sottapanna). That supreme certainty of release was mine (a Sottapanna attains Arahantship within seven births).

When I gained the distinctive, undying, assured eminence in penetrative insight, not doubting, I was revered by many people and experienced much pleasure and enjoyment.

Thus I am a goddess knowing the undying, a disciple of the Thatāgatha, the Unrivalled One, a knower of Dhamma established in the first fruit, a stream enterer. Henceforth there are no unwholesome births for me (a Sottapanna is not reborn in an unwholesome state).

I came to reverence the Unrivalled One and the virtuous monks who delight in what is skilled; to worship the auspicious assembly of ascetics and pay respect worthy of the Fortunate One, the Dhamma King.

I am joyful, and gladdened on seeing the Sage, the Thatāgatha, the outstanding trainer of men capable of being trained, who has cut off craving, who delights in what is skilled, the guide, I worship the supremely merciful, Compassionate One.

Vimānavatthu 137-149

Vangisa's many poems have been carefully preserved for their artistic and moral value. They show clearly that full awakening is possible even for those with sensual and passionate temperaments. All one needs to do is to strive on with determination, effort and diligence.



CHAPTER 17

Devadatta

Devadatta, who was the son of King Suppabuddha and Queen Pamita, was the cousin of Prince Siddhattha and brother of Princess Yasodharā. He was a playmate of Prince Siddhattha but from a young age displayed signs of cruelty towards animals and jealousy towards the Prince.

As a young prince, Siddhattha had always been everyone's favourite. He was obedient, kind and considerate. He also excelled in every skill and sport. Devadatta looked on, his heart filled with envy. Why was it that everyone obeyed Siddhattha and listened to Him? Why was He always singled out as the best? Could they not see how great he, Devadatta, was? His mean spirit could not understand that it was his own arrogance, cruel nature, and lack of consideration that turned people away from him.

When Siddhattha became the Buddha, Devadatta watched as Sākyan princes and princesses embraced His Doctrine. He, too, decided to give up his life as a prince and follow the Buddha's teaching. He entered the order together with his cousins, Ānanda and Anuruddha. For a brief period his jealousy and envy were buried as he explored the new teachings with interest. Before long, he reached the first stage of Jhana by developing his keen mind through meditation. Sāriputta, seeing his effort and progress, praised him for his diligence.

However, it was only a temporary reprieve. His old anger and envy poured back into his dark heart. Gripped with hatred and jealousy upon seeing the popularity and veneration the Buddha

received, he began to form a plot. Seeking the help of King Ajātasattu, a cruel and greedy king, he planned the murder of the Buddha.

At the first attempt to kill the Buddha, Devadatta's plan was foiled. The large rock he rolled down the mountain at Gijjhakuta bounced off another rock. A sliver detached and struck the sacred foot of the Buddha. The wound was deep and painful but not fatal. Devadatta plotted again. Feeding alcohol to the enraged king elephant Nālāgiri, he let it loose on the path towards the Buddha. But the Buddha with His grace calmed the enraged elephant. Unable to bear his defeat, Devadatta sought to cause disharmony among the monks. He requested that the Buddha change the rules for the monks to include the following:

1. Monks should only live in the forest (as opposed to living in monasteries)
2. Monks should only eat food that they received through begging (as opposed to food eaten on invitation by laymen)
3. Monks should only wear robes that were made from cloths that were used to wrap dead bodies - pānsukula (as opposed to robes given as gifts by laymen)
4. Monks should live at the foot of trees (as opposed to living in caves in forests)
5. Monks should not eat fish or meat

The compassionate Buddha, who saw that the above rules would cause unnecessary hardship to His monks while not adding any value to their reaching of enlightenment, refused. Instead, He said that any monk who wished to do so could adopt the above practice of austerities. This caused disharmony among the Sangha as some inexperienced monks, thinking that the only way to enlightenment was by the practice of austerities, left the Buddha and joined an order founded by Devadatta. With the start of these evil actions Devadatta lost the psychic powers and Jhāna that he had developed.

To understand fully the deep envy and hatred that Devadatta had towards the Buddha, we must look back in history to their first encounter. In the Seri Vānija Jātaka, the Buddha revealed

that many lifetimes before, Devadatta and He were both born as travelling merchants. Devadatta, who was an unscrupulous merchant, was travelling selling his wares when he was accosted by a poor peasant woman who did not have any money but needed merchandise. However, she had in her kitchen a large pot which was old and discoloured. Asking her granddaughter to bring forth the pot, she handed it to Devadatta and asked him to value it and give them merchandise in exchange for its value. On receiving the heavy pot, Devadatta realized that this was no ordinary vessel. It was a pot of gold, the value of which was greater than all the merchandise he carried in his cart. He also realized that neither the old lady nor her grand-daughter was aware of its value. Pretending that it was a valueless old pot he handed it back and ridiculed them for suggesting such a trade. His plan was to come back later and offer them a small amount of money, far less than the true value of the pot, and make it out to be an act of compassion that he had performed to help them.

Shortly after, our Bodhisatta visited the same hut to sell His merchandise. The old woman once again brought out the discoloured old pot and requested a trade for the merchandise that she needed. The Bodhisatta, realizing the value of the pot, informed the old woman that this was a golden vessel, the value of which exceeded all his merchandise. He then offered all his wares in exchange for the pot. The grateful old woman thanked the Bodhisatta for His honesty and informed Him of the ridicule to which they had been subject by the former merchant. She then handed the pot over to him.

Devadatta, however, was not finished with the poor woman. He came back hoping to trick her into giving him the pot for almost nothing. When he found out that the Bodhisatta had traded for the pot, his anger and envy were all-consuming. Raging after the Bodhisatta, he vowed enmity and revenge. Such deep anger and hatred is extremely dangerous. Devadatta carried his jealousy and anger towards the Buddha through many births. Many Jātaka stories that the Buddha dispensed illustrate Devadatta's hatred and schemes to hurt the Bodhisatta. Unable to accomplish his goal, Devadatta's envy and hatred grew with each succeeding encounter with the

Bodhisatta. This extreme hatred and past conditioning that had begun many years ago were carried through samsara and manifested in Devadatta's evil actions towards the Buddha.



As he approached the time of his death, Devadatta repented and

regretted his actions. He reflected on the impermanence of life and his oncoming death. A pang of fear gripped his heart. Why had he not heeded the teachings when he had the opportunity? How had he veered so far from the Truth? Stumbling to his feet, he walked toward Jetavana to beg forgiveness of the Buddha for the grave wrongs he had committed. But it was not to be. Red-hot flames engulfed his mind and body. Gasping for breath, Devadatta died in torment before he reached the Buddha, and was reborn in the Avichi hell.

Despite the evil acts performed by Devadatta, the Buddha predicted that his good kamma performed in the early years as a monk would eventually bear fruit. He said that in the distant future Devadatta would be a Pacceka Buddha by the name of Sathhissara.

Even though Devadatta was not one of the great disciples of the Buddha his story is worthy of note. It clearly illustrates that you are your own saviour. Even the Buddha, who must have had great compassion for his cousin, could not save him. That was something that Devadatta himself had to do. His story also illustrates the fact that there is hope for all. Even the extremely long lifespans in the lower worlds come to an end. Devadatta will one day reap the benefits of his good actions by becoming a Pacceka Buddha.



Part III

GREAT FEMALE DISCIPLES

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CHAPTER 18

Khemā

Khemā, who was of royal birth, lived in the city of Sagala in the kingdom of Magadha. Because of her golden skin, her parents had named her Khemā. When she grew up she became the chief consort of King Bimbisāra. She was extremely beautiful and very conscious of her exquisite beauty. As such she did not want to see the Buddha or hear the Dhamma, as the Buddha had made it quite clear that external beauty was impermanent and of no value to enlightenment.

King Bimbisāra, who was a devoted follower of the Buddha, wanted his queen to listen to the Buddha's teachings. He thought of a plan to entice her to visit the monastery in which the Buddha was residing. King Bimbisāra had his musicians describe in song the natural beauty of the grove in which the Buddha was residing. Khemā, who was extremely fond of beauty, listened enraptured to their description of the beautiful flowers and trees that surrounded the Buddha. Wanting to experience the beauty of the grove, Khemā decided to visit the monastery.

The Buddha was giving a discourse to a large gathering when he saw Khemā in the distance, approaching the monastery. With his psychic powers he created a vision of an exquisitely beautiful maiden by his side. Khemā, enchanted by the beauty of the grove and its scented flowers, walked closer and closer to the gathering until her attention was drawn to the beautiful maiden who was fanning the Buddha. Khemā, who admired beauty, was captivated by the maiden whose beauty far surpassed her own.



The Buddha then made the beautiful maiden age slowly before

her eyes. Khemā saw the maiden's beautiful skin wrinkle, her hair change to grey and her body age. She then saw the body collapse with age and pass away, leaving behind just a corpse which in turn changed to a heap of bones. Understanding that all conditioned phenomena were impermanent, Khemā realized that the same would happen to her. How could she retain her beauty when this exquisite vision aged and decomposed before her very eyes?

Khemā was ready to listen to the Buddha, who then dispensed to her the dangers of lust and sense pleasures and requested her to give up sense pleasures which were transient. Directing her spiritually advanced mind to the teachings, Khemā attained Arahantship. She then received permission from King Bimbisāra to enter the Noble Order of Nuns.

Khemā was able to penetrate the truth so quickly because of her practice of the virtues and wisdom many aeons ago. Because of her strong attraction to the Truth and wisdom, Khemā had attained birth in the proximity of Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas and Bodhisattas in many previous lives and had studied, practised and taught the Dhamma.

One hundred thousand world cycles ago, at the time of the Buddha Padumuttara, Khemā was born in a servant family in the City of Hannsavati. She had been inspired by the Padumuttara Buddha who was dispensing the Dhamma to an assembly of monks and nuns. There arose in her a strong desire to offer a meal to the Padumuttara Buddha. As she had no money, she had cut off her beautiful hair and sold it to earn the money required to give alms to the Buddha. She had then made the aspiration to be the chief female disciple of a future Buddha and foremost in wisdom. From that time onwards Khemā had worked tirelessly to fulfil her aspiration. Ninety-one world cycles ago at the time of the Buddha Vipassi, she was a Bhikkhuni and a teacher of the Dhamma. At the time of the Buddhas Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa in the present Mahā Baddha Kappa, she had been a lay disciple of the respective Buddhas, had built monasteries and given alms to each of the Buddhas and their retinue of monks and nuns, and practised the Dhamma diligently.

There are many Jātaka stories of Khemā's previous births. She had had the opportunity to develop wisdom as the wife of the Bodhisatta Gotama (Jātaka 354), as His daughter-in-law (Jātaka 397), and as the wife of Sāriputta (Jātaka 534). In each of these previous birth stories she had been virtuous and had performed many meritorious deeds to fulfil her aspiration.

After attaining Arahantship Khemā understood the impermanence of the body and the dangers of sensual pleasures. Once an insistent admirer tried to seduce her, as follows:

*“You are so young and beautiful,
And I myself am in the bloom of youth;
Come, noble lady, let us rejoice
In the music of a fivefold ensemble.”*

Khemā, who was already an Arahant, admonished Him as follows:

*“I am repelled and humiliated
By this putrid, fleshy body,
Afflicted by illness, so very fragile
I have uprooted sensual craving.*

*Sensual pleasures are now like sword stakes,
The aggregates are their chopping block.
That which you call sensual delight
Has become for me no delight at all.*

*Everywhere delight has been destroyed,
The mass of darkness has been shattered.
Know this O evil One -
You are defeated, Exterminator.*

*Fools who do not know reality
In forest glades they seek retreat
And worship in reverence, planets, stars, or fire
To quench passion's impurity.*

*The great Buddha, noblest of all men
I who worship Him
From sorrow of repeated birth am free
The Noble Buddha Order, I protect devotedly.*

Therigāthā 139-144

Khemā, who was the first female chief disciple of the Buddha, ranked foremost in wisdom and insight. She was respected by all for her wisdom and ability to explain the higher teachings. Her wisdom and lucid explanations of deep subjects made a lasting impression on King Pasenadi Kosala, who had great respect and regard for her. Khemā, with her sharp mind, wisdom, and analytical skills, helped the Buddha in teaching the Dhamma to His large congregation of nuns and in training the nuns, to whom she served as a role model. There are also many recorded instances where Khemā, with compassion and understanding, taught the Dhamma to male and female lay devotees.



CHAPTER 19

Uppalavannā

Uppalavannā was the unusually beautiful daughter of a rich merchant. Her skin was the blue-black colour and texture of the calyx of the blue lotus. Because of the unusually beautiful colour of her complexion, her parents named her Uppalavannā or ‘one with the hue of the blue lotus’. When she came of age her parents had her married to a young merchant from a wealthy family. As was the custom at the time, she moved to her husband’s home in Savatthi.

Uppalavannā lived happily with her in-laws until her husband had to travel to Rājagaha for business. Neither Uppalavannā nor her husband were aware that she was with child when he left. When her pregnancy became noticeable, her mother-in-law accused her of misconduct. Despite her pleas of innocence, Uppalavannā was cast out of her home by her mother-in-law who now despised her. Uppalavannā, who had not done any wrong, decided that she would go to Rājagaha in search of her husband.

The journey was long and difficult. Accepting the hospitality of strangers who felt compassion for the beautiful woman who was heavy with child, she walked slowly from city to city until her labour pains started. Resting in a hut on the way-side she delivered a baby son. Tired and weak, Uppalavannā wrapped the new-born in her robe and rested. Then, leaving the baby in the hut, she walked to the river close by to wash.

A stranger who was passing by heard the faint cry of her baby.

Seeing the little baby with no parents in sight, he decided to adopt the child. When Uppalavannā came back to the hut she was devastated. Weeping in sorrow she ran about looking for her child, but was unable to find her baby son.

Uppalavannā was desolated. She knew that she could no longer go to her husband. He would surely kill her if he found out that she had lost his son. A first-born son was the head of the family who carried on the lineage. In the male-dominant society of India this was a very precious child and his birth a celebrated event. Uppalavannā knew that she had no hope of being forgiven for her carelessness. Having no place to go, she decided to go home to her parents. She was walking through a thick jungle when a robber who was hiding out in the jungle caught sight of her. Attracted by her unusual beauty, he decided to take her as his wife. The desperate Uppalavannā agreed.

Before long she conceived again and gave birth to a baby girl. Her life, however, was not a happy, comfortable one. Her husband was often violently angry with her. He continually reminded her of her past and his gracious hospitality towards her in taking her as his wife. After one such long and furious argument he stormed off in anger. Uppalavannā, who was furious with her husband, jumped up and threw her baby daughter who was resting on her lap on to the bed. The baby flew off the bed, on to the floor and cut her head. Blood gushed from the wound as the baby lay unconscious. Uppalavannā was sure that she had accidentally killed her daughter. She knew that her husband would never believe her. She feared for her life for she knew the wrath of her robber husband. She decided to run away again.

Earning her keep by performing menial jobs the beautiful Uppalavannā scraped a living. Her former wealth and beauty were of no use to her. She was a fallen woman, ashamed to go back to her parents and afraid to go back to her husband. She lived thus for many years in great poverty. One day as she was gathering firewood a handsome youth saw her. Attracted by the older woman's beauty he decided to take her as his wife. Uppalavannā, who was tired of her insecure life, agreed.

Uppalavannā and her husband lived together in harmony for some time. Then one day he had to leave on business. When he came back he brought with him a second wife – a very beautiful woman who was in the flush of youth. Uppalavannā accepted the younger woman reluctantly. Men often had their way with women and having more than one wife was a common occurrence. The two women formed a shaky friendship. Uppalavannā was grooming the younger wife's hair one day when she noticed a large, jagged scar on her head. The young woman then informed her that she was the daughter of a robber and that she had injured her head when her mother had fought with her father. Uppalavannā was horrified. This was her own daughter whom she had left for dead many years ago. The thought that she and her daughter had shared a man sickened her. Unable to bear the shame of her degrading life she went to the Buddha for solace and comfort. Uppalavannā then decided to join the Noble Order of Nuns.

Soon afterwards it was her turn to unlock and clean the assembly hall. After she had lighted the lamp and swept the hall the flame of the lamp attracted her. Concentrating on the element of fire, she went into deep meditation and attained Arahantship together with the analytical knowledge.

Because of her comprehensive supernormal powers Uppalavannā was declared by the Buddha to be foremost in supernormal powers among His nuns. She was also His second chief female disciple. Together with Khemā she helped the Buddha with the teaching and administration of His growing congregation of nuns. Uppalavannā, who had suffered greatly in her youth because of society's treatment of women, helped other young women attain freedom from suffering. Her experience of the unique suffering faced by women made it easy for her to empathise with others in similar situations.

To understand Uppalavannā's quick attainment of enlightenment we need to go back many aeons to the time of the Buddha Padumuttara. At the time of the Buddha Padumuttara, Uppalavannā was born to a wealthy family in the City of Hannsavati. She had seen the Padumuttara Buddha appoint another nun foremost in supernormal powers and

appoint her as His second female disciple. Inspired by the nun, Uppalavannā had provided meals and the requisites to the Buddha and His retinue for seven days. She had then made the aspiration to be the second chief disciple of a Buddha. The Buddha Padumuttara, seeing that Uppalavannā would fulfill her aspiration, prophesied that under the Buddha Gotama she would be the second chief female disciple and foremost in supernormal powers. From this time onward Uppalavannā had performed meritorious deeds earnestly and worked towards her aspiration.

The text documents some of Uppalavannā's past births. At the time of the Kassapa Buddha, the Buddha who preceded our Gotama Buddha, Uppalavannā was born to the royal family in the city of Benares as the daughter of King Kiki. She had been a devoted follower of the Buddha and had performed many meritorious deeds, including the building of a beautiful monastery for the Buddha. At death she was reborn in a divine realm and enjoyed heavenly bliss for a long time.

Her next documented birth is as a poor woman. Between the time of the Supreme Buddha Kassapa and the Supreme Buddha Gotama there had appeared on earth many Pacceka Buddhas. A Pacceka Buddha who had been in deep meditation for seven days in the Gandhamadana Mountain had descended from the mountain in search of alms. At that time Uppalavannā had just picked some blue lotus flowers and rice which she had then made into popped rice. On seeing the Pacceka Buddha she had offered Him the popped rice and the beautiful blue lotus flowers that she had just picked. Then, full of joy, she had aspired to be as beautiful as the blue lotus. Accepting the meal and the flowers, the Pacceka Buddha had returned to the mountaintop, using astral travel. At death Uppalavannā was reborn in a heavenly realm where she enjoyed heavenly bliss for a long time.

She then passed away from the heavenly realm and was born again in the human realm. No record exists of her parents or her birth. The text documents that a hermit who lived in the forest near a lake where blue lotus flowers grew had found the beautiful baby by the side of the lake, beside the flowers. The

baby, who was very beautiful with skin the colour of a blue lotus, was named Uppalavannā by the hermit. He then decided to adopt the helpless infant. Uppalavannā grew up to be exceedingly beautiful and resembled a celestial nymph. She led a sheltered life alone in the forest with the hermit.

One day, a traveller who was passing through the forest saw the unusually beautiful girl and inquired from the hermit as to her origin. When the hermit explained that she was an orphan and that he had brought her up as his own child he went back and informed the king of the exceptionally beautiful maiden who lived in the forest. The King decided to make her his consort. Together with his courtiers, he visited the hermit and asked Uppalavannā to be his queen. She agreed. Leaving the forest, she moved into the palace and soon became his favourite queen.

The next documented birth is when Uppalavannā was reborn in Rājagaha as the wife of a farmer. At this time eight Pacceka Buddhas had appeared in the world and Uppalavannā had the good fortune to offer them alms. She had prepared a meal of fragrant rice and was taking it to her husband who was tilling the land when she saw the eight Buddhas seeking alms. She had immediately given the Buddhas the meal that she had prepared for her husband, and invited them to her home for their meal on the following day. She had then prepared fragrant food and picked eight bunches of blue lotus flowers, which she had offered to the Buddhas after the meal. For the second time, she aspired to be as beautiful as the blue lotus.

The next documented birth was in Sāvatti at the time of our Gotama Buddha. The aspiration made at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha was to bear fruit. Her degrading life was too much to bear. Sharing her husband with her daughter weighed heavily on her mind. She decided to join the order of nuns under the Buddha. Even though the text documents two instances of Uppalavannā's aspiration to be as beautiful as the blue lotus it is most likely that she also renewed her original aspiration to be foremost in supernatural powers and the second chief disciple of the Buddha. Fulfilment of such an aspiration requires great effort and many meritorious deeds.

It is likely that her unusual colouring and exotic beauty attracted more



attention, which resulted in the preservation of this section of

the text. The fact that Uppalavannā immediately agreed to be a nun under the Buddha Gotama and that she attained Arahantship shortly thereafter, indicates that there must have been many other instances when she had developed wisdom and spiritual insight and renewed her aspiration after performing meritorious deeds. These, however, were not available in my research.

At that time it was common for nuns, as it was for monks, to retreat into the forest to meditate. Uppalavannā returned from her alms round and entered her hut in the Dark Forest. Unknown to her, a former admirer named Ānanda, who was in love with her, had entered her hut and hidden under her bed. Shortly after she had laid down to rest, catching her by surprise, he climbed on top of her and overpowered her. Despite her pleas and protest, he abused her and had his way. He then left, slinking out unseen as he had come in. The evil of abusing an Arahant, however, was too powerful. Tormented by his evil deed, Ānanda died burning in the fires of his desire and was reborn in the Avichi Hell.

Uppalavannā composed herself and informed the nuns of her ordeal. The nuns in turn informed the Blessed One. The Buddha's worst fears for His Order of Nuns had come to pass. Uppalavannā, His chief disciple, had been overpowered, abused, and treated with disrespect. Approaching King Pasenadi Kosala, the Buddha requested that he build a residence for the nuns within the confines of the City. He then made it a monastic rule that nuns should not meditate and reside alone in the forest. From this time onwards nuns resided only within the city.

Sometime later the monks assembled in the Dhamma hall and began to discuss this incident. There arose a debate as to the needs of Arahants to gratify their passions. The Buddha then cleared up their doubts by informing them that the desire between a man and woman is quenched in those who have attained Arahantship and described an Arahant (Brāhmin) thus:

“One, who like water on a lotus leaf

*Or mustard seed on a needle point,
Clings not to pleasures sensual –
That one I call a Brāhmin (Arahanth).”*

Uppalavannā explains her suffering and final attainment of release as follows:

*“Both of us, mother and daughter
Were co-wives
Of me there was religious excitement
Amazing hair raising.*

*Woe upon sensual pleasures
Impure, evil-smelling, with many troubles
Wherein we,
Mother and daughter were co-wives.*

*Having seen the peril in sensual pleasures
And (seeing) renunciation as firm security,
I went forth at Rājagaha from the house
To the homeless state.*

*I know that I have lived before
The divine-eye has been purified
And there is knowledge of the state of mind
The ear-element has been purified*

*Supernormal powers too have been realized by me
I have attained the annihilation of craving
(These) six supernormal powers have been realized by me
The Buddha’s teaching has been done.*

*Having fashioned a four-horse chariot by supernormal powers
Having paid homage to the Buddha’s feet*

*The glorious protector of the world
I stood on one side.”*

Therīgāthā 224-229

Uppalavannā was often desired by many admirers because of her extraordinary beauty. The fact that she was a member of the Buddha's Holy Order did not deter them. The following verses illustrate the insistence of an admirer and Uppalavannā's response.

*“You who are so beautiful
Seated beneath a sal tree with blossoms crowned
So aware of your own loneliness
Do you not tremble when seducers come along?”*

*“Though men like you, seducers
A hundred thousand should approach
No single hair of mine will turn
Nor will I quake with fear
And so, tempter, coming alone
Of what effect are you?*

*I who possess supernormal powers
Can make my form disappear
Between your eyebrows or your belly
I could lodge and stay
How then, Māra, can you see me?*

*My mind I have so disciplined
Clairvoyance, I have cultivated
The fourfold path I have realized
I know the Buddha's words and ardently I follow.*

*Lusts as deadly weapons, rend and tear apart
These our bodies, heirs of senses
Desires of which you speak
Lack all desire for me.*

*I have conquered all desire
And rent apart
The murky gloom of ignorance
Know, tempter, I have triumphed over you.”*

Therīgāthā 230-235

The exotic Uppalavannā, who could relate to the unique suffering that women faced, was a great asset to the Buddha. Using her supernormal powers and her gentle pleasing nature, she helped many thousands of women in their emancipation. Many, drawn by her beauty, compassion and gentleness, emulated the great Arahant and attained their own enlightenment.



CHAPTER 20

Bhaddā Kundalakesā

At the time of the Buddha in the city of Rājagaha there lived a rich merchant who had a very beautiful daughter named Bhaddā. Because of her frivolous and passionate nature her parents had her confined to the seventh floor of a seven-story mansion where she lived in seclusion with her maidservants.

One day she heard a commotion and looking out of her window saw a very handsome youth who had been led to trial for committing a robbery. She instantly fell passionately and hopelessly in love with the youth. Her parents tried to dissuade her by pointing out that he was a thief and not to be trusted but Bhaddā would not heed their advice. Instead, she lay down on her bed and refused to eat or drink until the man was given to her in marriage. In desperation, Bhaddā's parents agreed to her request. Her father gave a large bribe to the officials who substituted a poor, innocent man for the youth, and Bhaddā's lover was freed. Bhaddā's parents gave her in marriage to the youth, hoping that her love and his good fortune would mend his ways.

But the youth, who was a thief at heart, did not change. Instead, he was obsessed with his wife's beautiful wedding jewellery, which he planned to steal from her. He informed Bhaddā that he had taken a vow to the God of the Mountains. He had vowed that if his life was spared he would go to the top of the mountain, the abode of the God, and make an offering. It was time, he said, to keep the vow. Instructing Bhaddā to dress in all her finery, he set off with her to the top of a high mountain.

On the way they reached a steep cliff with a sheer face known as robbers' cliff, as in accordance with the laws of that time thieves were put to death at this point by pushing them over the cliff. He then told Bhaddā to hand over all her jewellery and informed her of her impending death as he planned to push her over the cliff and make off with her jewels. Bhaddā was at a loss as to what she should do. However, being extremely quick-witted, she came up with a plan to foil her husband.

She agreed to his request and asked permission to pay obeisance to her husband whom she said she dearly loved. Then falling on her knees, she saluted him from each side and when she was directly behind him pushed him over the cliff.

Bhaddā, who was a kind and compassionate person, was horrified at what she had done. The fact that she had killed a person, even in self-defence, weighed on her mind. No longer was she attracted to men and sense pleasures. Having decided to take to the life of an ascetic, she joined a religious movement known as the Jains.

In keeping with the beliefs of the Jains her hair was pulled out at the roots as a form of penance. She followed their teachings and practised their religion diligently. Her hair however, started to grow back, only this time it came back in the form of thick curls. Bhaddā was soon referred to as Kundalakesā or 'curly hair'.

Before long Kundalakesā had mastered all the knowledge of the Jains. She moved from teacher to teacher, grasping and learning their philosophies and practices very quickly. Having studied under many spiritual teachers Kundalakesā became a very knowledgeable, spiritual person. So much so that she gained a reputation for being excellent at debating in matters of religion and philosophy.

Kundalakesā used to travel from city to city challenging people to debates. Whenever she entered a city, she made a small mound of sand and planted in the centre a branch of the rose apple tree. She would then challenge anyone who wanted to

debate with her to accept her challenge by trampling down the mound of sand.



One day when the Buddha was in residence at the Jetavana

monastery, Kundalakesā arrived in Sāvatti and issued her challenge. Sāriputta decided to accept her challenge. He instructed some children to go and trample the mound of sand on his behalf and to ask Kundalakesā to come to the monastery on the following day to debate with him.

Confident of her victory, Kundalakesā came to the monastery with a large gathering of her supporters. She began by questioning Sāriputta. Each question that she asked was answered correctly by Sāriputta. Kundalakesā asked question after question until she was exhausted of questions. No matter what her question Sāriputta knew the answer. It was now Sāriputta's turn to challenge her. Kundalakesā faltered at the very first question. Not knowing the answer she asked him to teach her. Sāriputta agreed to answer the question in the presence of the Buddha²³.

Sāriputta led her to the Buddha and Bhaddā listened to His teaching. Bhaddā, who was extremely quick-witted, attained Arahantship instantaneously. The Buddha declared that Bhaddā was foremost among the nuns in understanding the Dhamma quickly, for, like the monk Bahiya, she had attained enlightenment instantaneously.

Using her skill in debating Bhaddā travelled far and wide preaching the Dhamma to others so that they too could benefit by the Truth. She describes her experiences of enlightenment and her travels whilst teaching the Dhamma as follows:

*“Formerly I travelled in a single cloth
With plucked hair, covered with mud,
Imagining flaws in the flawless
And seeing no flaws in what is flawed.”*

Therigāthā 107

*“He then taught me the Dhamma,
The aggregates, sense bases, and elements.*

²³ The Dhammapada and the Therigāthā do not reconcile as to Bhaddā's meeting with the Buddha and her ordination. Selected text, from both sources were taken so as to reconcile the writings.



*The Leader told me about foulness
Impermanence, suffering and non self.*

*Having heard the Dhamma from Him,
I purified the vision of the Dhamma.
When I had understood true Dhamma
(I asked for) the going forth and ordination.*

*Requested, the Leader then said to me
“Come, O Bhaddā”
Then, having been fully ordained
I observed a little streamlet of water.*

*Through that stream of foot-washing water
I knew the process of rise and fall.
Then I reflected that all formations
Are exactly the same in nature.*

*Right on the spot my mind was released
Totally freed by the end of clinging.
The Victor then appointed me the chief
Of those with quick understanding.”*

Apadāna 38-46

*“Free from defilements, for fifty years
I travelled in Anga and Magadha.
Among the Vajjis in Kasi and Kosala,
I ate the alms food of the land.*

*That lay supporter - wise man indeed -
Who gave a robe to Bhaddā
Has generated abundant merit
For she is one free of all ties.”*

Therigāthā 110-111

CHAPTER 21

Patācārā

Patācārā was the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Sāvatti merchant. When she came of age her parents arranged a marriage for her to a man of similar status and wealth. Patācārā, however, was in love with one of the servants in her parents' household. She decided to elope with her lover as she felt that it would be impossible for her to obtain the consent of her parents to marry a servant.

Dressing as a servant and carrying a pot of water on her head, Patācārā fled with her lover. They set up house in a village at some distance from Sāvatti. Her husband tilled the land and earned a meagre living. Patācārā worked at pounding the rice, cooking and cleaning – duties that had formerly been performed by the servants in her parents' home. Thus she led a difficult life, paying in this birth itself for the suffering she had caused her parents through her elopement.

After some time Patācārā became pregnant with their first child. As was the custom she wanted to go back to her parents' home for the delivery. At the appropriate time she requested her husband to take her back to her parents. He refused, as he was sure that they would have him tortured and killed for taking her away from them. Patācārā then decided to go on her own. Telling her neighbours that she had gone to visit her parents, Patācārā started walking towards Sāvatti.

When her husband returned from work and found that Patācārā had left to see her parents he was distraught. Running after her he caught up with her and pleaded for her to return. At that time the birth pains started. Taking shelter under some bushes Patācārā gave birth to a baby boy. At her husband's insistence she turned back and returned to their home.

Some years later Patācārā became pregnant with their second child. When the time for the child's birth drew near, determined

to have the baby with the support of her parents, she took her older son and walked towards Sāvatti. She had walked half the distance when her husband caught up with her. Again he dissuaded her from going. But this time Patācārā was determined to be with her parents.

They were travelling thus when they were overcome by a fierce rainstorm. Strong winds tore across the path, swaying the branches hither and thither, and torrents of rain poured down. In the midst of the storm Patācārā's birth pains started. She asked her husband to build a temporary shelter to shield them from the torrential rains and wind. He left to cut down some suitable branches to build a shelter. Patācārā waited in vain for her husband's return. Then, shielding her first-born as best she could, she gave birth to a second son. Patācārā slept the night huddled under a bush, her body arched to shield her two sons from the storm.

The next morning she traced the steps of her husband to find his stiffened body. When cutting branches for a shelter he had disturbed a poisonous snake. Death had been painful but quick. Lamenting in sorrow, Patācārā gathered her sons and continued to her parents' home in Sāvatti.

On the way they had to cross the swollen river Aciravati. The water was waist-high and the current strong. Patācārā, exhausted by the storm and her recent ordeal of childbirth, knew that she could not carry both children. Leaving her older son on the bank she carried the newborn babe to the other side. Then she started back to fetch her first-born. She was half-way across when she saw a hawk swoop down to carry away the newborn who resembled a piece of red meat. Patācārā screamed and waved her hands, hoping the hawk would drop her baby. The hawk ignored her cries, but her first-born, thinking that his mother was calling him, ran into the river only to be swept away by the swirling waters.

Patācārā was broken with grief. She had lost her husband and two sons within one day. Numb with grief, her hair streaming, her clothes wet, a tear-stained Patācārā approached Sāvatti. There she met a city dweller and inquired as to the whereabouts

of her parents. The stranger begged her not to ask about that family. “Inquire about any other but not that family,” he said. But Patācārā insisted. He then informed her that the previous night’s strong winds had blown over their house, killing both her parents and her brother. Then, pointing towards blue smoke that rose into the air, he said, “Look, that is the smoke from the funeral pyre of the three that died. They were cremated together.”

Her grief too great to bear, Patācārā lost her mind. Screaming in pain she ran about the town, her clothes torn, hair streaming, half-naked. The locals abused her and called her names for they were sure that she was mentally deranged. A grief-stricken, half-crazy Patācārā approached the Jetavana monastery where the Buddha was residing. The townsfolk tried to stop her. But the Buddha, perceiving with his compassionate eye her inner wisdom, bade her enter. He then brought her back to mindfulness by His compassion and words. The Buddha said, “Regain your mindfulness, sister”. It was as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown over her body. The words shook her very being and calmed her grief-stricken mind. Wrapping a cloak that someone had thrown to her around her person, Patācārā told her tragic story to the Buddha.

The Buddha listened with compassion and patience, then told her not to be troubled any longer. “You have come to One who can help relieve your suffering. It is not only today that you have lost sons, husbands and parents, but throughout this infinite round of samsāra you have lost sons and others dear to you.” “You have, He said, shed more tears than the waters in the four oceans.” As He went on speaking Patācārā’s grief subsided. The Buddha then concluded with the following verse:

*“The four oceans contain but a little water
Compared to all the tears we have shed
Smitten by sorrow, bewildered by pain
Why, O woman, are you still heedless?”*

*No sons are there for shelter
No father or related folk
For one seized by death*

Kinsmen provide no shelter.

*Having well understood this fact
The wise men well restrained by virtue
Quickly indeed should clear
The path going to Nibbāna.”*

Dhammapada 268, 288, 289

By the time the Buddha had finished His discourse Patācārā was no longer the raving madwoman who had entered the monastery. She had penetrated the Truth of the impermanence of all conditioned things and attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotapanna. She then requested ordination as a nun. After entering the Noble Order of nuns, Patācārā practised the Dhamma diligently. Her diligence soon bore fruit, as before long Patācārā attained Arahantship. She explains her experiences and her attainment as follows in the Therigāthā:

*“Ploughing the field with their ploughs
Sowing seeds upon the ground,
Maintaining their wives and children,
Young men acquire wealth.*

*Then why, when I am pure in virtue,
Practising the Master’s Teaching
Have I not attained Nibbāna
For I am neither lazy nor arrogant?*

*Having washed my feet
I reflected upon the waters.
When I saw the foot water flow
From the high ground down the slope.*

*My mind became concentrated
Like an excellent thoroughbred steed.
Having taken a lamp I entered my hut
I inspected the bed and sat on the couch.*

*Then, having taken a needle
I pulled down the wick*

*The liberation of the mind
Was like the quenching of the lamp.”*

Therigāthā 112-116

Patācārā had achieved her goal. With the quenching of the lamp, her mind, which was one pointed, attained liberation. Patācārā was designated by the Buddha as the nun who was foremost in Vinaya (discipline rules for the monks and nuns). As a young girl Patācārā had been undisciplined and frivolous. She had rebelled against the authority of her parents and reaped the misfortune of her rebellion. Thus it is not surprising that she valued the importance of discipline and became the nun foremost in the Vinaya.

Patācārā was able to move from a frivolous girl to a saint so quickly because of her past life aspirations and training. At the time of the Padumuttara Buddha one hundred thousand world cycles ago, she had observed the Teacher assign to a nun the title of foremost in the discipline. She had been inspired by that nun and aspired to be the nun foremost in discipline under a future Buddha. The Buddha Padumuttara, seeing that Patācārā had the merit and ability to fulfil her aspiration, had prophesied that she would be the nun foremost in discipline at the time of the Buddha Gotama. Patācārā had been a nun under many subsequent Buddhas and the insight and wisdom she had acquired came to fruition under the Gotama Buddha.



Many nuns benefitted from Patācārā's instruction and training.

The following are the grateful words of the nun Cunda, formerly a beggar, who obtained instruction from her.

*“Because she had compassion for me
Patācārā gave me the going forth (ordination)
Then she gave me an exhortation,
And enjoined me in the ultimate goal.*

*Having heard her word,
I followed her instruction;
The lady’s exhortation was not in vain,
I am now canker-free, with the triple knowledge.”*

Therigāthā 125-126

The text also contained the unidentified writings of one who described the experiences of a group of 30 nuns who obtained instruction from Patācārā.

*Having heard her advice, Patācārā’s instruction,
They cleaned their feet and sat down on one side.
Then, devoted to serenity of mind,
They practised the Buddha’s teaching.*

*In the first watch of the night,
They recollected their former births.
In the night’s middle watch,
They purified the divine eye.
In the last watch of the night,
They sundered the mass of darkness.*

Having risen they worshipped her feet,

*“Your instruction has been taken to heart.
As the thirty gods honour Indra,
The one unconquered in battle,
So shall we dwell honouring you.
We are cankerless, bearers of triple knowledge.”*

Therigāthā 119-121

The writing clearly illustrates the gratitude of the nuns to the teacher whose instruction helped them to attain the unconditioned (Nibbāna). In addition to honouring the Buddha they were exceedingly grateful to the one who taught them the Dhamma, and worshipped and honoured their instructor. Just as the Buddha showed gratitude to the Bodhi Tree that gave Him shade and shelter, thus providing the environment He needed for mental concentration and enlightenment, His nuns and monks honoured the teachers who helped them reach Nibbāna.

Patācārā, who had suffered greatly because of her undisciplined and inconsiderate behaviour, devoted her life to teaching other young women monastic discipline and the benefits of a disciplined mind. She was respected as a great teacher and a compassionate nun who helped many women attain emancipation.



CHAPTER 22

Sundari Nandā

Nandā was the daughter of King Suddhodana and Queen Mahā Pajāpati Gotami and the stepsister of Prince Siddhattha²⁴. As she brought great pleasure and joy to her parents she was named Nandā, which means joy and pleasure. Nandā grew up to be extremely graceful and beautiful and was often referred to as Sunadari Nandā or ‘Nandā the Beautiful’.

When her mother, Queen Pajāpati, and many other Sākyan ladies gave up the household life to take up the holy life, Nandā decided to join them. However, she did not do so out of confidence in the Buddha or the Dhamma. Nandā was ordained as a nun to conform to the wishes of her relatives, whom she loved.

The lovely Nandā was very popular and respected by all. People were touched by the sight of the lovely royal daughter,

²⁴ According to the Dhammapada, Nandā is Nanda’s betrothed, Janapada Kalyāni, who was also referred to as Sundari Nandā because of her extraordinary beauty. If this version is correct she would be the future daughter-in-law of Pajāpati, as the marriage to her son did not take place. Please see story 14. It is possible that she remained as a daughter in King Suddhodana’s palace after Nanda’s ordination. This version may have occurred as the term daughter is used for both daughter-in-law and daughter in the Pāli language. After reading all the documentation, I selected for this book the version which states that Sundari Nandā was Nanda’s sister.

sister of the Buddha, wandering the streets for alms in the simple robes of a nun.



Nandā's mind, however, was not on her emancipation. She was

enthralled by her beauty and popularity. Nandā knew that she was not keeping the high ideals of the Holy Order. Afraid that the Buddha would admonish her for her vanity and preoccupation with beauty, she avoided meeting Him.

One day the Buddha had all His nuns who were in residence come to Him one at a time for instruction. Nandā did not comply as she felt guilty and did not want to face the Buddha. The Buddha then called her and gave her a spiritual message that emphasized all her good qualities. Even though this discourse made Nandā joyful and uplifted her, the Buddha realized that Nandā was not yet ready for a discourse on the Four Noble Truths.

Seeing that Nandā was still enthralled with her beauty, He created an exquisite vision of a beautiful maiden whose beauty surpassed Nandā's radiance. He then made the image age before her eyes. Nandā saw the beautiful maiden age, her skin growing old and wrinkled and her hair turning grey. She saw the woman collapse with age and finally die. She saw the body decompose and turn into an ugly sight, bloated with worms. Nandā realized the impermanence of this body with which she was so preoccupied. Her mind was now ready for the teachings. The Buddha then explained the Dhamma of impermanence and the loathsomeness of this body to her. He also gave her the loathsomeness of the body as her topic of meditation. Because of her strong attraction to her beauty it was necessary for her to contemplate the loathsomeness of her body to penetrate the Truth. Before long Nandā attained Arahantship and expressed her struggle for attainment and the bliss of Nibbāna as follows:

*“Nandā, behold this body,
Ailing, impure and putrid,
Develop the meditation on the foul,
Make the mind unified, well composed.*

*As is this so was that,
As is that so this will be (doctrine of cause and effect),
Putrid, exhaling a foul odour,
A thing in which fools delight.*

*Inspecting it as it is,
Unwearying by day and night,
With my own wisdom I pierced right through,
And then I saw for myself.*

*As I dwelt ever heedful,
Dissecting it (the body) with methodical thought,
I saw this body as it really is,
Both inside and outside.*

*Then I became disenchanted with the body,
My inward attachment faded away,
Being diligent and detached at heart,
I live in peace, fully quenched.”*

Therigāthā 82-86



CHAPTER 23

Bhaddā Kapilāni

Bhaddā was the former wife of Mahā Kassapa. Together with her husband she led a celibate life and eventually gave up her wealth and possessions to lead the life of an ascetic in search of Truth. When Kassapa suggested that they should part ways in search of a Teacher she agreed, and taking the left fork of the road, approached Sāvatti. She listened to the Dhamma of the Buddha at Jetavana but as He had not yet formed the order of the nuns she remained in a nunnery with another sect of ascetics.

It was approximately five years later that the Buddha formed the order of the nuns. Bhaddā then joined the order, meditated and attained Arahantship. At the time of the Padumuttara Buddha, Bhaddā, together with her husband, had performed many meritorious deeds. Whilst Kassapa, then known as Vedeha, had been inspired by a monk who led an austere life, Bhaddā had been inspired by a nun who could recollect many past births. After performing many meritorious actions, she had aspired to be the nun foremost in recollection of past births. The Padumuttara Buddha, seeing that her aspiration would be fulfilled, declared that at the time of the Gotama Buddha, one hundred thousand world cycles into the future, she would be the nun foremost in recollecting past births.

It is interesting to see the effects of the great Arahants' aspirations and their fulfilment. Even though Bhaddā had the potential to be an Arahant and had taken to the holy life five years prior to Mahā Pajāpati, she had no inclination to establish the order of the nuns. Her aspiration was to recollect aeons of past lives. This knowledge was her strength and was what she

used in motivating her pupils. When



studying the histories of the great disciples one realizes how

varied they were in temperament and interests, how each one was inspired by different attributes, selected that which interested them and then used this faculty to help others see the Truth. Bhaddā used her knowledge of past lives to interest and motivate her pupils to perform acts of merit and to strive diligently.

Also interesting are Bhaddā's past associations with Kassapa. During the era of the Buddha Padumuttara, Bhaddā and Vedeha performed many wholesome deeds and at death were reborn in the heavenly realms.

The next recorded life story is many, many years later, at the time of the Buddha Vipassi, the fifth preceding Buddha, ninety-one world cycles prior to the Buddha Gotama. At that time Bhaddā and Kassapa were once again husband and wife, but they were exceedingly poor. So poor, that they had only one outer garment which was of good quality. Husband and wife shared this one garment by each taking turns to go out.

At that time the Buddha Vipassi was giving a special sermon and both Bhaddā and her husband, Ekasātaka, wanted to hear Him speak²⁵. But as they only had one garment Bhaddā went during the daytime and her husband went in the night. As Ekasātaka listened to the sermon, the value of giving and generosity became so deeply impressed in his mind that he wanted to give the only outer garment they had to the Vipassi Buddha.

But after the thought entered his mind Ekasātaka started to have doubts. Thoughts rushed through his mind. "How can we manage with no outer garments? This is all we both have. Should I not consult my wife first?" Then pushing aside these doubts, he removed his outer garment and laid it at the feet of the Vipassi Buddha. Having done so he clapped his hands joyfully and cried, "I have won! I have won!" When the king, who was also in the audience, heard the cry of victory, he inquired as to what had happened. The king was overwhelmed

²⁵. Recorded in one text as an unrelated event that occurred at the time of the Gotama Buddha.

by the poor man's act of generosity. Making him the court chaplain he gave Ekasātaka and his wife many sets of clothes.

And so the situation of the poor couple changed. Resulting from this selfless act, at death Ekasātaka was reborn in a celestial realm. There he lived in splendour until the effects of his wholesome deeds wore off, whereupon he was reborn as a righteous king with Bhaddā as his chief queen.

Many other past life stories are documented where Kassapa and Bhaddā had been associated. Once Bhaddā and Kassapa were the parents of Ānanda. After the aged mother of Ānanda's teacher fell hopelessly in love with Ānanda, so much so as to plan the death of his teacher, her own son to have her lover, both Bhaddā and Ānanda took to the life of ascetics.

On another occasion Kassapa and Bhaddā had been the Brāhmin parents of four sons. Bhaddā's four sons were the Bodhisatta, our Buddha Gotama, Sāriputta, Moggallāna and Anurudha (Jātaka 509). Parents and children had all taken to the holy life of ascetics.

Also interesting is the life story at a time between Supreme Buddhas when Bhaddā had wronged a Pacceka Buddha. She had quarrelled with her sister-in-law, and seeing that her sister-in-law had just offered fragrant food to a Pacceka Buddha, she had taken his bowl, thrown out the food and filled it with mud. Almost immediately she had felt remorse for her action. Taking the bowl back she had washed it and refilled it with fragrant, well-prepared food.

As a kammic consequence of this action, in a subsequent birth Bhaddā was born with great wealth and beauty but her body gave off an unbearable smell. Her husband, who was again Kassapa, could not stand the smell and left her. She had many other suitors because of her wealth and beauty, but none would remain with her because of her offensive odour.

During this period there had appeared in the world a fully enlightened Supreme Buddha named Kassapa. Feeling that her life was of little use Baddhā sold all her property, melted down

her jewellery and formed a golden brick which she donated to the shrine that was being built to hold the relics of the Kassapa Buddha, who had just passed away. As a result of this deed her body became fragrant again and her former husband took her back.

The last documented life story was where Bhaddā had been the Queen of Benares and had supported many Pacceka Buddhas. Deeply moved at the sudden death of the Pacceka Buddhas she had given up her life as queen and taken to the life of an ascetic. By the powers of her renunciation and her meditative lifestyle she had been reborn in a Brahma realm. At the same time Kassapa too had been reborn in the Brahma realm. It was after this life that they had been reborn in the human world as Pippali Kassapa and Bhaddā Kapilāna. It was also the experience in the Brahma realm that resulted in their decision to lead a celibate life.

As an Arahant Bhikkhuni Bhaddā devoted herself to the teaching of younger nuns in monastic discipline. The Therigāthā documents her praise of her former husband Kassapa and her own attainment of emancipation.

*“A son of the Buddha and his rightful heir,
Kassapa who is well concentrated
Knows his abode in previous lives
The Brāhmin is a triple knowledge bearer.*

*Just so is Bhaddā Kapilāni
A triple knowledge nun who has left death behind.
Having conquered māra (death) and his mount,
She lives bearing her final body.*

*Having seen the grave danger in the world,
We both went forth into homelessness.
Now we are destroyers of the cankers,
Tamed and cool, we have won Nibbāna.”*

Therigāthā 63-66



CHAPTER 24

Kisā Gotami

Gotami was the daughter of a poor man. Because of the leanness of her body she was referred to as Kisā Gotami or “Lean Gotami”. She was fortunate, however, in marrying the son of a rich merchant. But the treatment she received from her in-laws was not in keeping with a lady of noble birth. They never let her forget her beginnings.

Before long Kisā Gotami conceived and gave birth to a son. She adored her child and lavished her attention and love on him. The child was just beginning to walk when he succumbed to a fatal sickness and died. Kisā Gotami, who had never experienced death before, was devastated. The in-laws who had mistreated her had accepted her after the birth of her son. As such she had lavished her attention on her son and centred her life around the child who had brought about her acceptance. Determined to seek medicine that would bring him back to life, she placed her dead child on her hip and went from house to house in search of a skilled physician.

The villagers began to laugh at her and call her names. Could she not see that her child was dead? But the grief-stricken Gotami persisted. A certain wise man, feeling compassion for the distraught woman, directed her to the Buddha. Paying obeisance to the Buddha, Kisā Gotami asked Him to bring her child back to life.

The Buddha, with his divine eye, saw that Kisā Gotami was spiritually advanced due to past life efforts. Her mind, however, was not ready for the Dhamma due to her unbearable grief.



Seeing that Kisā Gotami had never before experienced death,

the Buddha asked her to bring Him a few mustard seeds from a house where there had been no death. Kisā Gotami lived in a village where extended families lived together. She went from house to house with her dead child, only to find that she could not find a house where a death had not occurred. Before long Kisā Gotami realized that death was common to all beings. Disposing of her dead child in the cemetery, she went back to the Buddha for consolation.

The Buddha questioned her if she had obtained the mustard seeds. Gotami informed the Buddha that in every family in the village there had been a death. “The dead”, she said, “seem to outnumber the living.”

Seeing that Kisā Gotami was ready for the Dhamma, the Buddha taught her the impermanence of all things. At the end of the four-line discourse, Kisā Gotami, who was spiritually ripe, attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. She then asked permission to be ordained as a nun.

The nun Kisā Gotami practised the teachings of the Buddha in earnest. One day, as she was about to put out the lamp in the Dhamma hall, she was attracted by the flame. Concentrating on the dancing flame she reflected, “Even as it is with this flame, so also it is with living beings. Some flare up while others flicker out. Only they that have reached Nibbāna are seen no more.”

The Buddha, realizing that Kisā Gotami was close to reaching her goal, projected a radiant image of Himself and using her reflections instructed her as follows: “Even as it is with this flame, so is it also with living beings. Some flare up while others flicker out. Only they that have reached Nibbāna are seen no more. Therefore, better is the life of one who sees Nibbāna though living but for an instant than to endure a hundred years and not see Nibbāna.” At the end of the discourse Kisā Gotami attained the supreme bliss of Nibbāna.

In gratitude Kisā Gotami describes the great joy the Buddha gave her and encouraged others to associate with the Noble Ones.

*“To the world the Sage has praised
The value of noble friendship
By resorting to noble friends
Even a fool becomes wise.*

*One should resort to worthy people,
For thus one’s wisdom ever grows,
By resorting to worthy people
One is freed from suffering.*

*One should know the Four Noble Truths:
Suffering and its origination,
Then the cessation of suffering
And the Noble Eightfold Path.*

Therigāthā 213-215

Kisā Gotami, who had suffered greatly as a poor woman of low birth, related to other women who were in pain. The life of a woman was difficult and fraught with suffering. Women were often treated as chattel and abused. Many men had more than one wife. Kisā Gotami, who had suffered as a woman, was compassionate to the suffering of women. She describes some of the ordeals that women she knew had to experience and her relief in release from suffering. It is only when one understands the plight of women in India at the time of the Buddha that one can truly appreciate the radical change that He instituted and the gratitude that women such as Kisā Gotami felt towards Him for recognizing that women were as spiritually capable as men.

*“The Teacher, He the tamer of men
Claimed as sorrow, birth as woman
To be one among many others
Wife to man, it is sorrow, it is painful.*

*Women who have given birth but once,
Unable to go through that pain again
Slit their own throats.
Frail girls take poison,
When conceived in folly
Child and mother suffer greatly.*

*I have seen women
Who when their time to give birth comes near
Bear a child on the way before coming home
Then find dead their own husbands.*

*A woman once lost both her children;
Her destitute husband, he too died
She saw them all, mother, father, brother
Burn together on one funeral pyre.*

*Lowly and destitute by birth,
Reborn a thousand times
She suffered untold sorrow;
The tears she shed were as boundless as the sea.*

*She lived amid the burial grounds
To see beasts prey on her son's dead body,
Born to a lot so humble, a target for scorn
By the Light of Truth she won release.*

*I too have trod that Eightfold Path
So Noble, the roadway leading to peace
That quietude I have myself realized,
At Truth's mirror I have deeply gazed."*

Therigātha 216-224

Once she was approached by Mara, the evil one, who tried to seduce her but Gotami was strong and undefeatable. With equanimity she addresses the tempter as friend.

*"Why not when you've lost your son
Do you sit alone with a tearful face?
Having entered the woods all alone
Are you on the lookout for a man?"*

*"I have gotten past the death of sons;
With this the search for men has ended,
I do not sorrow, I do not weep,
Nor do I fear you, friend.*

*Delight everywhere has been destroyed,
The mass of darkness has been sundered.
Having conquered the mighty army of Death,
I dwell without defiling taints.”*

Samyutta Nikaya

The Buddha dispensed the Dhamma because of the impermanence of all things, for it is this impermanence that results in suffering. The Buddha often used the suffering caused by the death of a loved one to illustrate the impermanence of all conditioned phenomena. He then helped the spiritually advanced such as Kisā Gotami to attain the supreme bliss of the unconditioned Nibbāna. Kisā Gotami took on ascetic practices and wore coarse robes patched from the discarded rags she found at charnel grounds. The Buddha declared that Gotami was foremost among the nuns who wore coarse garments, one of the thirteen ascetic practices.



CHAPTER 25

Isidāsi

In Pātaliputta, which later became the capital of Emperor Asoka, there lived two nuns named Bodhi and Isidāsi who were good friends. They had both destroyed all defilements and attained enlightenment. One day the friends discussed their past histories and their initiation to the Noble Order. Bhikkuni Bodhi, who was elderly, had undergone great suffering. She told her story to Isidāsi and then asked the young and beautiful nun how someone as beautiful and likable as she had experienced the suffering of existence. Bodhi said,

*“You are lovely, noble Isidāsi,
And your youth has not yet faded.
What was the flaw that you had seen
That led you to pursue renunciation?”*

Therigatha 403

Isidāsi then told her life story. She had been born in the city of Ujjeni as the much-loved only daughter of a rich merchant. When she came of age, a wealthy merchant who was a friend of her father asked for her hand in marriage for his son. Isidāsi’s parents were overjoyed at the proposal as they knew the family well. Isidāsi, who was a model daughter, displayed these qualities and behaviour to her husband and in-laws. She soon won over the hearts of her parents-in-law. Isidāsi also grew to love her husband. Disregarding the help offered by her servants she took care of all his meals and needs herself. However, despite her love and model behaviour, her husband soon tired of her. Isidāsi describes her life as follows:

*“By myself I cooked the rice,
By myself I washed the dishes.
As a mother looks after her only son,
So did I serve my husband.*

*I showed him devotion unsurpassed,
I served him with a humble mind,
I arose early, I was diligent, virtuous,
And yet my husband hated me.”*

Therigatha 412-413

While admitting to his parents that Isidāsi was blameless her husband insisted that he could no longer live with her. However, as she had done no wrong, he offered to leave the city and start a new life elsewhere. Isidāsi’s parents-in-law were devastated. They loved their daughter-in-law and did not want to lose her. Thinking that there was a problem that their son was hesitant to tell them, they questioned Isidāsi. She answered truthfully as follows:

*“I have done nothing wrong,
I have done him no harm,
I have not spoken rudely to him.
What have I done that my husband hates me?”*

Therigatha 418

Her parents-in-law were perplexed and disappointed. They had grown to love Isidāsi as a daughter. They did not, however, want their son to move away to another city. They decided to send Isidāsi back to her parents, certain that with her beauty and kindness she would easily find another suitable partner. This rejection was devastating to Isidāsi. Being sent back to one’s parents was a disgrace and a shame in Indian society at the time of the Buddha. Isidāsi describes her pain as follows:

*“Rejected, overcome by suffering,
They led me back to my father’s house.
While appeasing our son, they exclaimed,
We have lost the beautiful goddess of fortune”.*

Therigatha 419

Isidāsi's parents were perplexed by what had happened. Accepting the inevitable they began looking for a suitable husband. Before long they found a wealthy young man who was so overcome by Isidāsi's beauty and deportment that he offered to provide half of the usual marriage dowry that was given by the bride's father. Despite the fact that Isidāsi lavished her attention on her new husband and treated him with utmost respect, the same pattern followed. Within a month he returned her to her father and annulled the marriage, though he could give no cause for his extreme dislike of his model wife.

Isidāsi was devastated. This second rejection pierced her heart like a poisoned arrow. She moped around the house, dejected. When a mendicant came to their house begging for alms, Isidāsi's desperate father offered her to the ascetic. The ascetic seemed to be unsatisfied with his solitary life. The prospect of a beautiful wife and a life of luxury in a splendid mansion appealed to him. Giving his begging bowl and robes to her father he accepted Isidāsi as his wife. But after two weeks he brought her back and asked for his robe and bowl. "He preferred", he said, "to be the poorest man on earth than to live with Isidāsi under the same roof." Despite the fact that they pleaded to know the reason for the rejection he could give none. "All he knew, he said, was that he could not live with her."

Isidāsi was ready to commit suicide. The shame and sorrow of three rejections were too hard to bear. She was planning for her death when a Buddhist nun named Jinaddata came to their house for alms. Pleased by her serenity and countenance, Isidāsi asked permission from her father to enter the Noble Order. Her father was hesitant as he did not want to lose her company, but seeing the suffering in his beloved daughter's eyes, he agreed. He then urged her to attain the supreme state of Nibbāna.



*Attain enlightenment and the supreme state
Gain Nibbāna which the Best of Men
Has Himself already realized”.*

Therigatha 432

After her ordination Isidāsi concentrated her efforts on reaching the supreme bliss of Nibbāna. Within seven days she attained the higher knowledge. Isidāsi could recollect her past lives, see the passing away and rebirth of beings and penetrate the knowledge required for the destruction of all suffering. Looking into her past lives Isidāsi understood the cause of her failed marriages.

She explained the cause of her present suffering to her friend Bodhi. Eight lifetimes ago Isidāsi had been born a man – a rich, handsome and dashing goldsmith. Women had been attracted to him and he had taken advantage of them even though they were other men’s wives and innocent girls. He flitted from woman to woman, breaking hearts, quite oblivious to the pain and suffering he was causing. He wanted to take his pleasure again and again. He wanted change. The fact that he had broken many hearts and marriages did not bother him at all. They were all trophies that he could brag about.

He danced his last dance at death. He had to reap the effects of the suffering he had caused. At death he was reborn in hell and experienced the torment and suffering of the fiery realm for many, many years. Just as he had caused suffering with no regard to the pain of others, he suffered torment without mercy.

After suffering in hellish torment for the lifespan of the plane he was reborn in the womb of a monkey. Seven days after his birth the leader of the monkeys, seeing a threat to his position from the new-born monkey, bit his genitals and castrated him. Isidāsi describes this act, done to prevent future rivalry, as follows:

*“A great monkey leader of the troops,
Castrated me when I was seven days old,*

*This was the fruit of that kamma
Because I had seduced others wives.”*

Therigatha 437

At death he was reborn as a sheep, the offspring of a lame, one-eyed ewe. He lived in misery for twelve years, infected with intestinal worms, obliged to transport children and pull the plough and cart with hardly any rest. Hard work was what the frivolous goldsmith had avoided and hard work was what he now had to endure as a beast of burden. He had been castrated by his owner and his life was a misery of intense, hard work with loss of sight in his latter years.

After being in the animal realm for two births he was reborn in the human world as a cross between a male and a female. He was the child of a slave girl born in the gutter. He led a solitary life of suffering, shunned by both males and females and was treated as a freak.

In his next birth he (the former goldsmith) was reborn as a female. He had now become a woman, the object of his former desire. The woman's father was a good-for-nothing carter who failed at every endeavour. He gave his daughter to a rich merchant to pay his debts. Despite her pleas she found herself taken into the merchant's household as a slave girl. She was sixteen years old and an attractive girl. After some time, the son of the household fell in love with her, and took her as his second wife. Naturally, the first wife was most displeased with this arrangement. The slave girl, however, did everything in her power to strike discord between the husband and wife, as she liked her new position. This resulted in much fighting and quarrelling in the household until she finally succeeded in breaking up the marriage and separating the husband and his first wife.

The fruits of her earlier unwholesome deeds as the goldsmith had been exhausted. But this new suffering she had caused had to bear fruit. The slave girl was reborn as Isidāsi. In her previous birth she

had caused disharmony and separated a husband and wife, causing great grief and suffering. She now had to suffer the contempt and rejection of every man she married. The text does not specify the meritorious deeds that she must have performed in her past, previous to her frivolous behaviour, but her compassion, calm acceptance and devotion to her husbands created the opportunity for the past good deeds to mature. With effort and diligence Isidāsi attained Nibbāna. She explained her final liberation as follows:

*“This was the fruit of that past deed,
That although I served them like a slave,
They rejected me and went away;
Of that too I have made an end.”*

Therigatha 447

We can all benefit from Isidāsi’s story. Over time, especially in the western world, moral values have deteriorated. Young men and women are very casual about sexual behaviour and the media and television have glorified sex through advertisements, movies and magazines. What was once considered immoral is now considered moral. Despite the ignorance of humankind, the law of kamma operates. The Buddha laid down a very simple moral code to follow regarding sexual behaviour. As Buddhists we are not only advised to refrain from adultery and rape, but we are cautioned against inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind. This includes relationships with those under the guardianship of parents, relatives and friends and relationships with members of religious orders who have taken the vows of celibacy. Buddhists should not indulge in casual sex but should exercise restraint and ensure that they form meaningful, long-term relationships based on love and commitment before they give in to their desires. Buddhists should also actively work at preventing child abuse and the breaking up and disruption of marriages caused by casual relationships.



CHAPTER 26

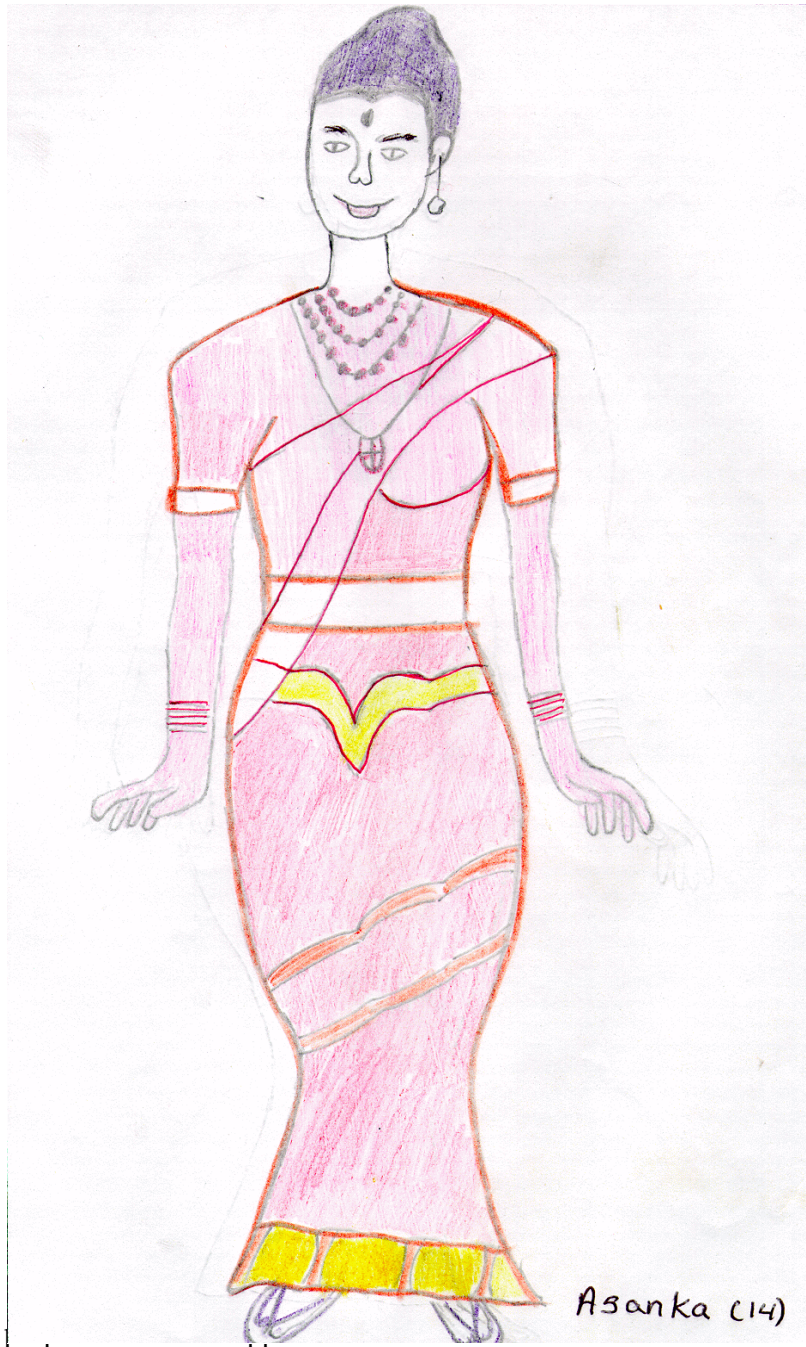
Sonā

At the time of the Buddha there lived in Sāvatti a woman named Sonā who had ten children. She had spent her entire life occupied with the welfare of her children. She had enjoyed nursing them, feeding them, educating them and when they were older, finding suitable partners for them. Her whole life centred around her children and soon she was known as ‘Sonā with many children’.

Sonā’s husband was a lay devotee of the Buddha. As his children were all married and his responsibilities reduced, he spent more and more time studying and practising the Dhamma. Before long he was totally inspired by the Teachings. He decided to join the Holy Order. It was not easy for Sonā to accept this decision, but instead of holding him back she decided that she too would lead a more religious life. With this in mind she divided up her wealth and land among her children and asked them to support her by providing her with the bare necessities of life. She then spent her time in religious activities as a lay devotee of the Buddha.

For some time all went well. Then, one by one, her children and their spouses began to feel that she was a burden to them. They had never really accepted their father’s decision to join the Noble Order and they resented supporting their mother who was now spending most of her time in religious devotion. Forgetting how much she had done for them, they started quarrelling amongst themselves on an equitable division of her support and care. They

all felt that it had been an unfair arrangement in which each of them had to bear an unfair



so much became a nuisance and a burden.

This ungrateful treatment caused great suffering to Sonā, who had sacrificed her entire life for her children. She became bitter and angry. She had expected her children to support her in her old age as was the custom in India. Having distributed her wealth among them she had no means to support herself. Disillusioned, she decided to seek solace from the Buddha.

After listening to one of the Buddha's nuns, Sonā began to analyze her feelings and disappointment in her children. Had she sacrificed her life for them and nurtured them selflessly or had she done it with expectation of return? Had she given unconditional love to her children? How did her feelings compare with the compassion and loving-kindness the Buddha advocated?

Sonā decided to join the Buddha's order of nuns to practise and develop selfless love and virtues. Following her husband's path, she became a nun. Before long, however, Sonā realized that she had taken her old habits with her into the order. She was an old woman who was set in her ways. Joining the order had not changed her as a person. Often she was a target for criticism by younger nuns as she had difficulties in changing her ways. Sonā realized that attaining spiritual purity was no easy task.

Sonā began to practise mindfulness and self-observation in earnest. She had to be aware of her emotions and weaknesses and discipline her mind. Because she had entered the order in her latter years Sonā knew that she had to work with effort. She practised meditation with urgency, often passing the entire night in sitting and walking meditation. So as not to disturb others, she started to meditate in the lower hall in the dark by guiding herself with the pillars. Before long her determination and effort resulted in Sonā attaining Arahantship. She describes her attainment in her own words:

*“Then the other Bhikkhunis
Left me alone in the convent.*

*They had given me instructions
To boil a cauldron of water.*

*Having fetched the water
I poured it into the cauldron.
I put the cauldron on the stove and sat,
Then my mind became composed.*

*I saw the aggregates as impermanent,
I saw them as suffering and not self.
Having expelled all cankers from my heart,
Right there I attained Arahantship.”*

Apadāna 234-236

When the other nuns returned they asked Sonā for the hot water and she realized that she had not as yet boiled it. Using the supernatural powers that she now possessed and the fire element Sonā heated the water and offered it to the nuns, who reported her extraordinary feat to the Buddha. The Buddha declared Sonā as foremost among the nuns who put forth great effort and praised her effort and attainment by saying:

*“Though one should live a hundred years
As a lazy, sluggish person,
Better it is to live a single day
Firmly arousing one’s energy.”*

Dhammapada 112

Sonā describes her life in the Therigāthā as follows:

*“I bore ten children in this body,
In this physical frame of mine.
Then when I was old and frail,
I went up to a Bhikkhuni.*

*She gave me a discourse on the Teaching,
On the aggregates, sense bases, elements.
Having heard the Dhamma discourses from her,
I shaved my hair and then went forth.*

*Whilst still a probationer,
I purified the divine eye.
Now I know my past abodes,
Where it is that I lived before.*

*With one-pointed mind well composed,
I developed the sinless state.
Immediately I was released,
Quenched with the end of clinging.*

*The five aggregates are well understood,
They stand cut off at the root.
Fie on you, O wretched aging,
Now there is no more re-becoming.”*

Therigāthā 102-106

Sonā’s story is one from which we can all learn. Children who read this should reflect on their responsibilities to their parents. Our parents took care of us when we were too young to take care of ourselves, taught us right from wrong and showed us the Dhamma. The Buddha said that even if we carried our parents on our shoulders for our entire lifetime (shoulder the responsibility of their care and comfort) we would not be able to settle the obligation we owe them for what they have done. The effects of what one does to one’s parents have forceful results. Both the wholesome and unwholesome deeds we perform towards our parents have serious consequences.

For parents there is much to learn from Sonā. We do not own our children. How can we, when we do not even own ourselves? Children should fulfill their obligations to their parents. We should show them by example. But bringing up children in Western

society is even more difficult than bringing them up in the East. If our children don't fulfil their duties we must remember that the Buddha said that we are our own saviours. Nothing is gained by reflecting on their omissions and getting bitter and angry. But much can be gained by disciplining ourselves and purifying our own minds. The cause of suffering – craving lies within us. All we can do is to ensure that we have done our best for our children. We cannot save them just as they cannot save us. In the end each of us is our own saviour.



Part IV

ROYAL PATRONS

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CHAPTER 27

King Bimbisāra

King Bimbisāra was the Buddha's first Royal Patron. He ruled the kingdom of Magadha, the capital of which was Rājagaha, from the age of 15 when he ascended the throne until his death at the age of fifty-two.

King Bimbisāra saw the Buddha for the first time prior to His enlightenment. The Ascetic Gotama was seeking alms in Rājagaha when the king saw the Great Ascetic of royal carriage and great bearing. Wishing to find out who this Great Ascetic was, the King with his royal entourage followed the Ascetic Gotama to Pandavapabbata, where He was resting after His meal. He then questioned the Ascetic Gotama on His birthplace and ancestry. Ascetic Gotama replied :

“Just straight, O King, upon the Himalayas, there is, in the district of Kosala of ancient families, a country endowed with wealth and energy. I am sprung from that family, which by clan belongs to the Solar Dynasty, by birth to the Sākyans. I crave not for pleasures of the senses. Realizing the unwholesomeness of sensual pleasures and seeing renunciation as safe, I proceeded to seek the Highest, for in that my mind rejoices.?”

The King then invited the Ascetic Gotama to visit his City once He had attained enlightenment. In keeping with the promise that He had made, the Buddha visited Rājagaha after His enlightenment. Travelling from Gayā to Rājagaha, He stayed at the Suppatittha Shrine in a palm grove.

The news of the Buddha's arrival soon spread across the city. His reputation as a great teacher and the reverence with which His Teaching was heralded, had spread to Rājagaha. The King welcomed the Buddha with a large retinue of attendants. He then paid reverence to Him and sat respectfully to the side. As both the Buddha and Mahā Kassapa were in attendance some of the people were not sure who was the teacher and who the pupil. Reading their minds, the Buddha questioned Kassapa as to why he had given up fire-sacrifice, a Brāhmanic ritual. Recognizing the doubts in the minds of the people, Kassapa said that he had given up fire sacrifice because he preferred the passionless, peaceful state of Nibbāna. Then, falling at the feet of the Buddha, he paid reverence and said, "My Teacher, Lord, is the Exalted One – I am the disciple."

The people were inspired by Kassapa's devotion. The Buddha then dispensed the Mahā Narada Kassapa Jātaka, where in a previous birth the Bodhisatta had helped Kassapa in a similar way. On hearing the Dhamma, King Bimbisāra attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotapanna. After taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, the king invited the Buddha and His retinue to the palace for their meal on the following day.

After the meal, King Bimbisāra asked the Buddha what type of place would be suitable for His residence. The Buddha said that a place which was secluded and quiet, not too far but not too close to the city, would be pleasing to Him. Reflecting that his bamboo grove would be a perfect residence, the king donated the park to the Buddha and the Sangha. Even though the Buddha's new residence was known as Veluvanārāma and ārāma is used to denote a monastery, there were no buildings or monastery at the bamboo grove. The Buddha and His monks resided under the shelter of the trees. The Buddha spent six years of the rainy season at Veluvanārāma.

After His conversion the King led the life of an exemplary monarch. He had two consorts, Kosala Devi, who was the sister of

King Pasenadi Kosala, and Khemā, who later became the chief female disciple of the Buddha. His Queen, Kosala Devi, gave birth to a son whom they named Ajātasattu.



pathetic death. Ajātasattu, led by Devadatta, attempted to kill his father to gain the throne. When King Bimbisāra became aware of his son's plan, the compassionate king handed over the throne to his son and stepped down from the monarchy. The ungrateful son, who was under Devadatta's wicked influence, threw his father in prison with the instructions that he should be left without food, to starve to death. His mother alone had free access to the prison.

The loyal queen carried food in her waist pouch, but before long Ajātasattu became aware of his mother's efforts. When he forbade her to carry food in her waist pouch she carried food concealed in her hair knot. When this too was discovered and forbidden she applied a mixture of honey, butter, ghee, and molasses all over her body and let the king lick her skin to sustain himself.

The cruel Ajātasattu then denied his mother access to visit the King. King Bimbisāra was without any means of sustenance. But being a Sotāpanna, he lived in meditative bliss and spiritual happiness. Ruthlessly, Ajātasattu ordered his barber to slash the old king's feet and place a mixture of salt and oil on the wounds. He then commanded him to walk on hot coals. Upon seeing the barber, King Bimbisāra thought that his son had realized the folly of his behaviour and was sending the court barber to help cut his hair and beard so that he could be cleaned up for release. But it was not to be. The barber started the inhumane torture as instructed by the new king. The aged King Bimbisāra died in extreme agony as the result of an unwholesome action performed in a past life.

On the same day that the old king died the news was brought to Ajātasattu that his wife had given birth to a baby son. Overcome by parental joy and happiness the king asked his mother if his father too had loved him as he did this new-born babe. His mother, Kosala Devi, then informed the cruel Ajātasattu of the great love that Bimbisāra had had for him.

Ajātasattu's mother revealed that when she was carrying him there had arisen in her an inhuman desire to drink the blood from the hand of the king. She had concealed this desire but had withered

away as it was a craving that she could not control. On hearing of her problem the king gladly cut open his palm to let her drink his blood.

The sages who could foretell the future had declared that this son would be an enemy of the king. The queen had then wanted to abort the baby but King Bimbisāra, full of love and pride for the unborn child, had refused. Later, when the baby was born, the sages had again foretold that he would be an enemy of the king. For the second time the queen had wanted to kill the baby. For the second time the king had prevented her from killing her son. The queen had named the baby Ajātasattu, or unborn enemy.

The queen then added that on one occasion when an infected boil on the baby's foot had made him fretful and angry she had taken him to the court to ask the king's advice. On hearing of the problem the king had placed the baby's foot in his mouth and sucked at the boil. The boil had then burst, spitting pus and blood into his mouth. The king, full of love and compassion, had swallowed the pus and continued to soothe the baby.

Ajātasattu was filled with shame and regret upon hearing his mother's words. He sent a message to release his father but it was too late. King Bimbisāra had closed his eyes forever, and was immediately reborn in the Catumahārajika Heaven as a god named Janavasabha. Influenced by the Dhamma, King Ajātasattu changed, and became one of the lay followers of the Buddha and the patron of the First Sangha Council.



CHAPTER 28

Queen Mallikā

Mallikā was the beautiful and talented daughter of the foreman of garland-makers in Sāvatti. Mallikā, who was sixteen, often went to the public flower gardens with her friends. One beautiful, clear day she packed a lunch of special rice and set out for the flower gardens to join her friends. As she was leaving the city, she saw the Buddha with a group of monks seeking alms.

So inspired was Mallikā by the serenity and presence of the Buddha that she offered Him the lunch she had packed and prostrated herself at His feet. She had no idea that she was offering her food to the Buddha but was overjoyed and suffused with happiness by her impulsive gesture.

The Buddha accepted the gift and smiled. Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, knowing that the Buddha would not have smiled without a reason, asked Him why he had smiled. The Buddha replied that this girl would reap the benefits of her gift the very same day by becoming the Queen of Kosala.

This seemed an impossibility for Mallikā was of low caste. In India at that time the caste system flourished. It seemed very unlikely that King Pasenadi Kosala would choose a girl of low caste as his queen. King Kosala, who was one of the powerful kings of India, was at that time in battle with King Ajātasattu, the king of Magadha. Defeated in battle he was returning, downcast, when he

heard sweet, melodious singing in the flower garden. Enchanted by the singing he rode into the flower garden to find the exceedingly beautiful Mallikā. Mallikā,



singing in happiness among the flowers.

For some time King Kosala observed Mallikā, who was a vision of beauty and grace. Then, dismounting from his horse, he spoke to her and asked if she was married. When Mallikā replied that she was not married he talked to her about his misfortune in battle. Soothed by her consoling words and enraptured by her beauty and gentleness, he decided to make her his queen. Placing her carefully on his horse he took her back to her parents' home. In the evening he sent an entourage to fetch her to the palace and made her his queen.

As the beloved of King Kosala, Mallikā was respected by all and surrounded by luxury and a multitude of servants, who fulfilled her every wish. Soon it was known to all that Mallikā the flower girl was elevated to the position of Queen of Kosala resulting from the effects of her heartfelt gift to the Buddha. Wherever she went people would joyously honour her, saying, "There goes Mallikā, our queen, who gives generously to the Buddha."

Mallikā in turn became a devoted follower of the Buddha and a supporter of the Noble Order. She was also an intelligent queen who questioned and analyzed her observations. Observing the different status of people, her elevation from poverty to wealth and power, and convinced that nothing happened without a cause, Mallikā went to the monastery where the Buddha was residing with the following question:

*"Why is it that some women are beautiful, wealthy and powerful,
While some are beautiful but without wealth and power,
And yet others ugly but wealthy and powerful,
And some ugly, poor and without power?"*

The Buddha then explained to her that those who are gentle and patient are born beautiful. Those who have given generously are born wealthy. And those that who not envious and rejoice in the success of others are born with power. Rare is the person who has performed all three of these deeds and as such, depending on their

actions, one found a combination of these traits in persons. Mallikā then decided that she would practise generosity, compassion and patience, and be happy at the success of others.

She provided alms and requisites to the Buddha and His retinue and built an ebony hall for Dhamma discussion. She practised gentleness to her husband and servants and all others with whom she came into contact when performing her duties as queen. And when King Pasenadi Kosala decided to take a second wife, Vāsabha Khattiya, she welcomed her and treated her as a younger sister without envy or jealousy.

Mallikā also helped King Kosala, who was a follower of the Brahmins, to have confidence in the teachings of the Buddha. The king had had some disturbing dreams, which he felt represented some misfortune. Summoning the Brāhmin priests the king asked them to interpret his dreams. Claiming that the Gods were displeased, they requested a huge animal sacrifice to appease the Gods. Mallikā, who practised the Buddha's teaching of compassion and loving-kindness to all living beings, was horrified to find preparation for the slaughter of so many animals. She advised the King to seek the Buddha's counsel on the meaning of his dreams.

The Buddha informed the king that these dreams did not foretell any misfortune for him. As a result of his practice of meditation, the king had dreamt of the future in the matter that was closest to him, the royalty and the government. The Buddha said that these dreams signified the downfall in society that would occur as a result of moral deterioration of royalty and their governments. King Pasenadi Kosala became a devoted follower of the Buddha and a royal patron after this incident.

The king also requested the Buddha to send a teacher to the palace to instruct his wives in the Dhamma. The Buddha delegated Ānanda to teach Mallikā and Vāsaba Khattiya the Dhamma. Mallikā, with her keen mind, progressed rapidly, but Vāsaba Khattiya (who was a relative of the Buddha) was inattentive, slow

to understand and had difficulty in grasping the Dhamma. Ānanda approached the Buddha and informed him of the progress of the two royal ladies by saying that Queen Mallikā grasped the concepts of the Dhamma and practised diligently what he taught, but that the Buddha's kinswoman had derived little benefit from the Dhamma. The Buddha confirmed Ānanda's assessment by saying that well-spoken words were fruitless to those who did not study and practise the Dhamma, just as a beautiful flower without scent, while the well-spoken words were fruitful to those who studied and practised the Dhamma, like a beautiful flower that was laden with scent²⁶.

Even though the king and queen were a devoted couple they had their differences. In one instance the king had a falling out with Mallikā regarding the way she was carrying out her royal duties. The Buddha then advised the king to reconcile their differences by relating instances from their past lives.

The first instance was when they were born as husband and wife in the Deva world. They had been very attached to each other and one day had been separated due to a flash flood that prevented the king's return to their home. So worried and grief-stricken had they both been in their separation that they had vowed never to be separated again even for one day.

The other was when the king had been the crown prince and Mallikā his consort. The prince had contracted leprosy and had decided to give up his kingdom and live in the jungle away from his subjects. The queen had decided that she would join him and had taken care of him and nursed him to health. When King Kosala heard these incidents from the past he forgave Mallikā and reconciled their differences. Mallikā, in gratitude to the Buddha for His counsel, said:

“With joy I heard your varied words,

²⁶. Only scented flowers were used for garlands and offerings.

*Which were spoken for our welfare.
With your words you dispelled my sorrow.
May you live long, my Ascetic Bringer of Joy.”*

Though Mallikā led a blameless life of generosity and loving-kindness she transgressed and indulged in sexual misconduct in one instance. When questioned by the king, without owning up to her inappropriate behaviour, she lied to cover up her disgrace. This one incident,²⁷ which occurred shortly before her death, must have worked on her mind because at death she was reborn for seven days in hell.

King Kosala was grief-stricken at the death of his chief queen and visited the Buddha to find out her place of rebirth. Knowing that she was reborn in hell due to her misconduct and deceit, and not wanting to add to the sorrows of the king, the Buddha distracted the king by giving an inspiring discourse that took his mind away from the question. For six days the Buddha prevented King Kosala from asking the place of Mallikā's rebirth by distracting him with inspiring teachings. On the seventh day he informed the King that Mallikā had been reborn in the Tusita Heaven among the Devas of delight.

²⁷At death during the Javana thought-moment this incident had entered Mallika's mind resulting in rebirth in one of the hells. However, as her life to this point had been blameless with many meritorious deeds, she passed away from this birth within seven days to a realm of delight (Tusita Heaven) that reflected her wholesome actions.



CHAPTER 29

King Pasenadi Kosala

King Pasenadi Kosala was the son of King Mahā Kosala who reigned in the kingdom of Kosala, the capital of which was Sāvatti. He had two consorts. His chief consort, Queen Mallikā, was the daughter of a garland maker. His second consort, Vasabha Khattiyā, was the daughter of Mahānāma (one of prince Siddhatta's cousins and Anuruddha's brother) and a slave girl. He and Vasabha Khattiyā had a son named Vidudhabha who, when he came of age, attempted to destroy the Sākyan race and capital.

King Kosala's conversion from Brāhmanism to the teachings of the Buddha seems to have occurred very early in the Buddha's ministry. King Kosala had questioned the Buddha, and the Buddha had dispensed a very interesting sutta on four objects that should not be disregarded or overlooked: a warrior prince, a snake, a fire, and a Bhikkhu. The Buddha had then gone on to explain that a warrior prince, though young, may ruthlessly cause harm to others if enraged, just as would a small, poisonous snake. A little fire may produce a conflagration and even a young monk could be an Arahant. The king had been inspired by this sermon and had taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. However, his Chief Queen, Mallikā, a very devout follower of the Buddha, was largely responsible for his religious enthusiasm.

In the Samyutta Nikāya there are many discourses that the Buddha had dispensed for King Kosala. They have been compiled and

preserved as the Kosala Samyutta. Once when the king was in the company of the Buddha, a group of ascetics with long hair, beards, and long nails had passed. The king had got up, respectfully saluted them, and introduced himself by saying that he was King Pasenadi Kosala. When they had passed he had approached the Buddha and inquired as to whether they were Arahants or those who were striving for Arahantship. The Buddha explained that it was difficult for ordinary persons to ascertain if a person is an Arahant. He had then explained that it is by association that one can judge a person's conduct, and only after a long time of association. He had then gone on to add that it is only a heedful and intelligent person who would be able to make such a distinction. His instruction is just as applicable today as there are among us many who hide impure thoughts behind a mantle of outward purity.

The Buddha said:

*“Not by his outward guise is man well-known,
In fleeting glance let none place confidence.
In garb of refined, well-conducted folk
The unrestrained live in the world at large.*

*As a clay earring made to counterfeit,
Or a bronze halfpenny coated with gold,
Some fare at large, hidden beneath disguise,
On the surface comely and fair; within impure.”*

Kindred Sayings 104-106

By necessity the king was often at war to defend his kingdom. With wisdom, the Buddha consoled the defeated king and reminded him of the futility of conquest. His wisdom applies just as much today as it did over 2,500 years ago. The Buddha said:

*“Victory breeds hatred,
The defeated lives in pain.
Happily the peaceful live,*

Giving up victory and defeat.”

Dhammapada 121



confiscated King Ajātasattu's entire army, only sparing his life. When the Buddha heard of the king's victory He explained to him that anger breeds anger and explained the law of cause and effect (kamma) by saying:

*“A man may spoil another,
Just so far as it may serve his ends,
But when he's spoiled by others,
He, despoiled, spoils yet again.*

*So long as evil's fruit is not matured,
The fool does fancy, now's the hour, the chance!
But when the deed eventually bears fruit,
He fareth ill.*

*The slayer gets a slayer in his turn,
The conquered gets one who conquers him.
The abuser wins abuse,
The annoyer frets.*

*Thus by the evolution of the deed,
A man who spoils is spoiled again.”*

The Buddha's advice to King Kosala on his disappointment when Queen Mallikā gave birth to a baby girl is history making! The Buddha advised the king that a well brought-up girl could be even better than a son and counselled him to take care of her and bring her up with love and devotion. When she grew up, Queen Mallikā's daughter, Princess Vajirā, became the Queen of Magadha. No religious teacher had made such a bold statement, especially in India at a time when women were considered to be inferior to men and often treated with disrespect.

The Buddha also helped the king overcome his grief at the death of his beloved grandmother by reminding him of the impermanence of all things. King Kosala approached the Buddha and informed Him that he would give anything within his means to save his grandmother, who was like a mother to him. The Buddha consoled

him by saying,

*“All beings are mortal, they end with death;
They have death in prospect.
All vessels wrought by the potter,
Whether they are baked or unbaked,
Are breakable - they end broken;
They have breakage in prospect.”*

Reminded of the impermanence of all phenomena King Kosala strengthened his mind and left.

Observing the generosity of the Buddha’s chief benefactor, Anāthapindika, King Kosala decided to follow his example. He invited five hundred monks daily to the palace for their noonday meal. At the start he was very enthusiastic and arranged for everything with great fervour, but later, busy with state affairs, he left it to his servants to entertain the monks. After some time he was surprised to find that the monks were taking the food and giving it to other lay devotees, who in turn offered it back to the same monks. The king approached the Buddha and asked Him the reason for this strange behaviour by the monks.

The Buddha then informed King Kosala that his servants were offering the rich food in a careless manner. Often they insulted the monks and called them parasites and asked them to work and earn their own food. “The monks”, He said, “were not comfortable in accepting the food under these conditions.” The lay devotees, however, unable to afford such food to give to the monks themselves, were eager to use this opportunity and offered the food back with fervour. The Buddha then explained to the king that when persons like Anāthapindika and Visākhā gave to the monks they gave with great devotion and fervour, and the monks, who could sense their happiness in giving, were comfortable in accepting. They welcomed the monks and treated them as spiritual friends who lived for the welfare and benefit of all beings. He then said:

*“A dish may be insipid or savoury,
The food may be meagre or abundant,
Yet if it is given by a friendly hand,
Then it becomes a delicious meal.”*

Jātaka 346

King Kosala was a strong supporter of the Buddha and used every opportunity to listen to the Dhamma. However, despite his benign and compassionate influence, his son, Vidudhabha, was a rebel. King Kosala had an unfortunate death at the hands of his cruel and greedy son.

The king often visited the Buddha to hear the Dhamma. When he did, he was in the habit of removing his crown at the monastery gate. The king then left some of his guards at the entrance to ensure the security of his crown. Vidudhabha, who was familiar with his father’s behaviour, used this opportunity to steal the crown. Seizing the crown, he had his men kill the king’s guards. He then left a servant at the entrance to inform King Kosala that he was now the ruler and that the king was no longer welcome in the kingdom.

The king was dismayed to hear from the servant about his son’s behaviour. Since it was late in the night and starting to get cold, he walked to a neighbouring kingdom, but the city gates were closed for the night. He then walked back to Savathi hoping that his son would let him into the city, only to find the gates closed. The old king lay down in a hut outside the city gates in the extreme cold and wrapped his robe around him to keep warm. But his heart was weak. He could not tolerate the cold or the sorrow of his son’s conduct. King Kosala died in loneliness outside the city walls, in a hut, alone with one servant

Vidudhabha ruled the kingdom ruthlessly. On finding out that his mother was the daughter of a Sākyan prince and a slave girl and that his father had been tricked into marrying her, Vidudhabha was furious. Vowing to wash his hands in the blood of the Sākyans just

as the chair which he had sat had been washed in milk to cleanse it of his non-Sākyan bloodline by the blue-blooded, arrogant Sākyans, Vidudhabha waged war. On his third attempt he killed the majority of the Sākyan royalty in Kapilavatthu. The remainder fled to form a new city. Vididhabha and his men in turn met their death on the banks of the river during a flash flood.



CHAPTER 30

Queen Sāmāvati

At the time of the Buddha there lived a man and woman who had a beautiful daughter named Sāmāvati. They lived in harmony and happiness until the plague broke out in their city. Fearing for their lives, they decided to travel to Kosambi, the capital of Vamsa, where they hoped to seek support from Ghosaka, the Finance Minister of King Udena, who was a family friend.

The municipality had set up a public alms hall to cope with the refugees left homeless as a result of the plague. Sāmāvati went there to obtain food for her parents and herself. On the first day she asked for three portions of food, on the second day she asked for two portions of food, and on the third day she asked for one portion of food.

Mitta, the man who was distributing the food, asked her sarcastically if she had finally realized the capacity of her stomach. Sāmāvati replied quite calmly that on the first day there were three of them for whom she was taking food. Then her father succumbed to the plague and died. On the second day she was bringing food for her mother and herself. Then her mother succumbed to the plague and died. And so, today, she only needed one portion of food.

Mitta felt badly about his sarcasm and thoughtless remark. He offered to adopt Sāmāvati as his foster child. Sāmāvati agreed. She then joined her foster father in helping in the distribution of alms. Before long Sāmāvati, who was very capable and intelligent, had organized the chaotic and noisy alms hall into an orderly, well-run operation. So much so that Ghosaka, the Finance Minister, was surprised at the change and complimented Mitta on his organization. Mitta modestly gave the credit to his adopted daughter and introduced Ghosaka to Sāmāvati.

When Ghosaka found out that Sāmāvati was his departed friend's daughter he decided to adopt her and bring her up as his own. Even though Mitta loved her dearly and did not want to lose his foster daughter he realized that she would have many luxuries as the Finance Minister's daughter that he could not possibly afford. Not wanting to stand in the way of Sāmāvati's good fortune, he agreed. As Ghosaka's daughter, Sāmāvati became heiress to a large fortune and moved among the nobility.

The king of Kosambi, King Udena, had two beautiful consorts. He had married the first, Queen Vāsuladattā, for political reasons, and his second queen, Māgandiyā, for her intelligence. Neither of his consorts, however, provided him with the love, compassion and gentleness that he wanted from a wife. In fact, if anything Māgandiyā was rather cold, self-centred and harsh.

One day the King saw the beautiful, gentle and compassionate Sāmāvati. Captivated by her beauty and gentleness, he decided to have her as his third consort. Ghosaka, who loved his adopted daughter dearly and knew the temperament of the king, refused. King Udena was furious. He dismissed Ghosaka from his position as Finance Minister and confiscated his mansion.

Sāmāvati was desolate at the misfortune that her adopted father had to face on her behalf. Even though she did not want to marry the king she agreed to his proposal providing that Ghosaka was reinstated and given back his mansion. The King agreed. Sāmāvati soon became the King's favourite consort.

In keeping with her position, Sāmāvati had a large retinue of servants who took care of her every wish. Among them was a servant named Khujjuttarā. Each day the queen gave Khujjuttarā eight gold coins to buy flowers. Each day Khujjuttarā pocketed four of the gold coins and bought flowers with the remainder. One day when she went to buy flowers the florist informed her that he had invited the Buddha and His monks for alms and asked her if she would like to stay and participate.

Khujjuttarā agreed. She stayed on to help and after the meal listened attentively to the Buddha's discourse. Khujjuttarā was transformed by the Buddha's teaching. She had a keen mind developed over countless years. By the end of the discourse she attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotapanna. Regretting her former deceit, Khujjuttarā bought eight gold coins' worth of flowers for the queen.

The moment Queen Sāmāvati saw Khujjuttarā she noticed a difference. Khujjuttarā looked serene and exuded an inner radiance. She was also perplexed as to why there was double the quantity of flowers. The queen questioned Khujjuttarā about her transformation and the extra flowers. Khujjuttarā confessed the truth and her previous deceit and begged for forgiveness. She then informed the queen about the discourse of the Buddha that had changed her life.

Impressed by Khujjuttarā's inner transformation the queen decided to find out more about the Buddha and His teachings. She appointed Khujjuttarā as her personal attendant and requested her to visit the monastery every day. She instructed her to listen to the Dhamma and come back and teach what she had learned to the queen and her court.

Khujjuttarā, who had an outstanding memory, repeated the Buddha's teaching word for word²⁸. The queen and her ladies were inspired by the Dhamma and Kujjuatarā's gift to them. Placing her on a higher chair and themselves seated on lower seats, they listened to her with respect and gratitude.

Queen Sāmāvati, who was totally inspired by the Dhamma, asked the king's permission to invite the Buddha and His disciples to the palace for their daily meals. Unable to attend Himself, the Buddha sent Ānanda as His representative to the palace. Each day (whilst the Buddha was in residence in Kosambi), Ānanda accepted his noonday meal from Queen Sāmāvati and taught her and the ladies of her court the Dhamma. Before long Queen Sāmāvati attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotapanna. Many of the ladies of the court also attained higher stages of sainthood. Her foster father, Ghosaka, embraced the doctrine and built a large monastery in Kosambi named Ghositārāma for the Buddha and His retinue.

Queen Sāmāvati continued to grow in the Dhamma. Her most outstanding trait was her immense love and compassion for all living beings. Sāmāvati was the embodiment of compassion and loving-kindness and radiated it to all with whom she came in contact.

However, the Queen's popularity and the fact that she was undoubtedly King Udaya's favourite did not please Queen Māgandiyā. She had accepted Sāmāvati as it was common practice for the King to have more than one consort. But she could not accept Sāmāvati's veneration of the Buddha and the Dhamma.

As a young girl Māgandiyā had been exceptionally beautiful. Her parents when looking for a suitable partner for her had looked for an exceptionally handsome and cultured man. One day the Buddha had visited their house in seek of alms. Not recognizing the

²⁸ Her teachings have been compiled in a book known as the Itivutta (The Buddha's Sayings), translated by John D. Ireland.

Buddha, but pleased with his deportment and countenance, they had offered Māgandiyā in marriage to Him. The Buddha had refused the offer and dispensed a sutta on impermanence and the loathsomeness of the body for which He had no desire. Māgandiyā, however, who was vain and proud of her beauty, took His discourse personally and felt slighted at being refused. Seeing Sāmāvati venerate the Buddha who she felt had slighted her made her remember the old wounds. She decided to focus her anger and jealousy on Sāmāvati. She tried many times to break the faith and love that King Udena had for Sāmāvati by making false accusations. But Sāmāvati remained calm and full of compassion and loving-kindness. Nothing that Māgandiyā did changed the strong love that the king had for his favourite queen.



of some greedy relatives she planned to set fire to her quarters on a day when she herself was away from the city. Māgandiya was aware of the king's wrath and wanted to ensure that no blame could possibly be directed at her. Queen Sāmāvati and the majority of her court perished in the fire. The queen, however, remained to the end full of compassion and loving-kindness. She encouraged her ladies, who were engulfed by flames, to concentrate and abide in the Dhamma by saying:

*“It would not be an easy matter,
Even with the knowledge of the Buddha,
To determine exactly the number of times
Our bodies have thus been burnt by fire
As we have passed from birth to birth
In the beginning-less round of existence.
Therefore be heedful.”*

Inspired by her words the ladies of the court meditated and achieved mental development so that at death all among them had entered the various stages of sainthood.

On hearing the sad news the monks questioned the Buddha as to the place of rebirth of the queen and her ladies and the cause of their tragic death. The Buddha then informed them that all of the ladies had reached either the first, second or third stage of sainthood and as such were reborn in the Deva and Brahma Realms from which they would in due course attain Arahantship.

He then went on to explain that in a previous birth Sāmāvati had been born as Queen of Benares and had gone to the river to bathe with her ladies. Feeling cold, she had instructed her maids to set the bushes that surrounded them on fire. Too late they had realized that a Pacceka Buddha was meditating there, hidden from view among the bushes. Afraid that she would be admonished for her careless act if the Pacceka Buddha lived to tell His story, she had instructed her maids to pour oil over Him in the hope of killing Him. They had not succeeded in killing the Pacceka Buddha, but the premeditated murder had resulted in Sāmāvati's and her ladies'

present demise.

Despite Māgandiyā's devious plan the king realized that she had instigated Sāmāvati's murder. Maddened by his grief he instructed Māgandiyā and her relatives to be tortured and burned to death as punishment. Later the king regretted his revenge. He kept seeing the compassionate Sāmāvati and felt that he was even more distanced from her due to his act of revenge than resulted from her death. He embraced the teachings of the Buddha that had transformed Sāmāvati and became one of his royal patrons. The Buddha declared Sāmāvati to be foremost among the female lay disciples who practised loving-kindness.



Part V

LAY DISCIPLES

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CHAPTER 31

Anāthapindika

Sudatta, a wealthy merchant, (better known as Anāthapindika because of his generosity to the destitute), was visiting his brother-in-law in Sāvatti when he noted that a celebration was being organized. When he inquired as to whom they were honouring, he was informed that the Buddha was visiting Sāvatti and that the celebrations were in honour of the Exalted One. Upon hearing the name Buddha, Anāthapindika became transformed with fervour and vowed to see the Blessed One.

Early next morning he set off to see the Buddha. The Buddha, realizing that His chief lay disciple was on his way to see Him, went to meet Sudatta. Seeing Sudatta in the distance, the Buddha greeted him by name. Realizing that he was in the presence of the Blessed One, Sudatta fell down at the Buddha's feet and honoured Him. Then, overwhelmed by the Buddha's presence, Anāthapindika inquired if the Blessed One had slept well. Anāthapindika glimpsed the real stature of the Buddha when he heard His reply to this question of courtesy. The Buddha replied:

*“Always indeed He sleeps well,
The Brāhmin who is fully quenched,
Who does not cling to sensual pleasure,
Cool at heart is that acquisition.*

Having cut off all attachment,

*Having removed desire from the heart,
The Peaceful One indeed sleeps well,
For he has attained peace of mind.”*

The Buddha then introduced Anāthapindika to the Dhamma by using the method of graduated teaching known as Ānupubbikatha. He started with generosity and the benefits of giving. He then moved on to virtue and the benefits of virtue, and followed this with the bliss found in the heavenly realms. The Buddha then advised Anāthapindika on the perils of vanity and the dangers of sense pleasures and introduced him to renunciation. Then, sensing that Anāthapindika’s mind was uplifted and serene, the Buddha taught him the Four Noble Truths which are the unique Teaching of every Buddha. On hearing the Buddha, Anāthapindika, who was spiritually advanced, reached the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. Inspired and wanting to hear more, Anāthapindika invited the Buddha to his brother-in-law’s house for His noonday meal.

After the meal Anāthapindika questioned the Buddha on a suitable place for His residence. On hearing that the Buddha was seeking a quiet place for His retinue and Himself to spend the rainy season, Anāthapindika looked for a suitable park to make available to Him.

The park which Anāthapindika chose for the Buddha was the lush garden of Prince Jeta (King Pasenadi Kosala’s son). The Prince, however, was not selling his beautiful park. When the persistent Anāthapindika would not relent from his request to buy the park, the exasperated Jeta said, “Cover the entire garden with 100,000²⁹ gold coins.” This was an unreasonably high price even for a park as beautiful as his. To his surprise, Anāthapindika accepted and soon carts arrived bearing thousands and thousands of gold coins that he strew all over the garden. His curiosity now aroused, Jeta asked Anāthapindika the reason for which he needed the park. On hearing that it was for the Buddha and His retinue he relented and handed over the park to Anāthapindika.

¹ 18 million gold coins as per the Vinaya Pitaka.

The Vinaya Pitaka describes the quarters Anāthapindika built as a vast complex with monasteries, attendance halls, meditation cells, bathrooms, lotus ponds and walkways - a beautiful complex that would be worthy of the Buddha. In honour of the two men responsible for the compound, it was named Jetavana Anāthapindikarāma (Anāthapindika's monastery in Jeta's grove). Anāthapindika asked the Buddha the appropriate way to gift the monastery to Him. The Buddha then requested Anāthapindika to donate the park by dedicating it to the Sangha of the present and the Sangha of the future. The Buddha then encouraged others in the building of monasteries by highlighting the benefits of such a gift to the Sangha. He said:

*“They (monasteries) ward off cold and heat and beasts of prey,
Creeping things, gnats, and in the wet season, rain.
When the dreaded hot wind arises, it is warded off.
To meditate and obtain insight in a shelter, at ease
A dwelling place is praised by the Awakened One,
As a chief gift to the Order.*

*Therefore a wise man looking for his own weal,
Should have dwelling places built, so that
Learned Ones can stay therein.*

*To the upright, with mind purified,
Food, drink, robes, and lodging, he should give,
Then they will teach him Dhamma, dispelling every ill,
He, knowing the Dhamma attains Nibbāna - canker free.”*

Vinaya Pitaka

Anāthapindika then provided the Sangha with rice gruel, alms bowls, robes and medicine and invited the monks to his seven-story mansion daily, to partake in the noonday meal. He also provided food and gifts for the townsfolk as part of the great donation. His mansion was thus a blaze of saffron robes enveloped by the soothing and calming Dhamma.

Every time the Buddha visited Sāvatti, Anāthapindika visited Him. At times, however, the Buddha was in residence elsewhere or was away helping another in distress. Anāthapindika approached Ānanda and informed him of the disappointment of other devotees and himself who came to visit the Buddha. He informed Ānanda that he would like to build a shrine so that devotees would have a symbol of the Buddha to use to strengthen their minds.

When Ānanda reported this to the Buddha He said that there were three types of shrines that could be used as a symbol of the Buddha. The first type was generally built after the Buddha's Parinibbāna and was a stupa that contained relics of the Blessed One³⁰. The second was an object that had a connection with the Enlightened One and had been used by Him such as a robe or an alms bowl. The third was a visible symbol of the Buddha such as a picture or a statue. The first was not appropriate during the lifetime of the Buddha and so it was decided to use an object that had helped the Enlightened One. Statues of the Buddha seem only to have become popular as a symbol worthy of reverence about 300 years after His Parinibbāna.

The Bodhi tree in Uruwela, Buddha Gaya, seemed appropriate and so it was decided that a sapling of the tree would be brought and planted in Sāvatti. Mahā Moggallāna, using astral travel, brought the sapling and Anāthapindika planted it at the Jetavana Park. Devotees at the time of the Buddha as well as present-day devotees

³⁰. Some of the Buddha's hair has been enshrined in a stupa in Thiriyaya, Sri Lanka. The ancient text carved in a rock cave states that the relics were the handful of hair given to Tapassu and Bhalluka, the two merchants who offered rice cakes to the Buddha in the seventh week after enlightenment. Tapassu and Bhalluka, on whom the Buddha used the graduated method of teaching named Ānupubbikatha, took refuge in the Buddha and the Dhamma. They then asked for some relic for reverence. The Buddha then took some hair from his head and offered it to the merchants, His first lay disciples.

honour the Bodhi Tree as they would honour the Buddha and use this object to strengthen their minds. It should be noted, however, that it is only saplings or branches that are offshoots of the original Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment that are worthy of respect. Buddhists, however, have extended this to other trees of the same species, and made the Bodhi Tree (Religiose Faicaso tree), a symbol of the Buddha and His enlightenment.

Anāthapindika and his wife Punnalakkhanā had three daughters and one son. Two of his daughters, Big Subhaddā and Little Subhaddā, followed in their parents' footsteps and were devoted disciples of the Buddha. They were both happily married and, like their father, had attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotapanna. Their youngest daughter Sumana surpassed the others in wisdom and attained the second stage of sainthood, Sakadagami. She did not marry but this was not because she had renounced the lay life. In fact when she saw the happiness of her two elder sisters she was overcome by depression and her spiritual strength could not sustain her. She wasted away, eating hardly anything, and passed away at a young age. She was reborn in the Tusita heaven as a goddess amidst great comfort and pleasures. The text did not specify why she had problems in finding a suitable partner. As arranged marriages were the norm it should not have been difficult to find a suitable partner for one who was so wealthy and spiritually advanced.

Anāthapindika's only son, Kāla, was known as the dark one. He did not care for the Dhamma but immersed himself completely in affairs of business. He was completely absorbed in accumulating wealth. Anāthapindika decided to trick his son into listening to the Buddha. He offered Kāla one thousand gold pieces if he would observe the religious holiday with his family. Kāla consented and soon found that it was relaxing to take one day off from business in the company of his family to observe religious rites. Then his father offered him another thousand gold pieces if he would visit the Buddha at the monastery, listen to the Dhamma, and learn a stanza of the Dhamma.

Kāla agreed. He went to the monastery, saluted the Buddha respectfully and sat down to listen to the Dhamma. The Buddha, realizing that Kāla was spiritually ready for the Dhamma, used His powers to make him misunderstand what he had learned. Just as Kāla thought that he had mastered the teaching he had a doubt. He listened repeatedly with keen attention. Before long Kāla was inspired by the Dhamma. He listened, enraptured by the teaching, and attained Sotapanna. After this he too, like his father, was absorbed in the practice of generosity and the Dhamma and was often called Little Anāthapindika.

Anāthapindika, who was totally committed to the Dhamma, influenced many persons to follow the Buddha by his example. He did not force his ideas or beliefs on them, but seeing his devotion, kindness and generosity, many of his friends and business associates adopted his ways. His home became a centre of generosity and kindness and his example spread to the surrounding areas.

The Buddha spent sixteen of the forty-five rainy seasons at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatti. Because of this, many significant events took place and many discourses were dispensed by the Buddha at the Jetavana. When the Buddha was in residence Anāthapindika visited the monastery twice a day to hear the Dhamma. He did not, however, feel that he should get any special treatment from the Buddha because he was His chief male lay benefactor. As such he often visited the Buddha and sat quietly awaiting instruction from the Buddha without question. If the Buddha was not forthcoming with the Dhamma he would relate an incident from his life and his response to it and wait for the Buddha to comment on the appropriateness of his actions. In this way Anāthapindika related the day-to-day happenings to the Dhamma and ensured that he lived the Dhamma in all aspects of his life.

The Buddha often dispensed to Anāthapindika teachings suitable for the lay devotees. On one occasion the Buddha dispensed a sutta

on the four kinds of bliss to be won by a householder. He said they were:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| The bliss of ownership | - Wealth gained by hard work and energetic striving that was lawfully earned. And when he reflects on the ownership of such wealth he feels bliss and happiness. |
| The bliss of wealth | - Wealth should be enjoyed by the householder and he should enjoy sharing his wealth with others. And when he does he feels bliss and happiness. |
| The bliss of debtlessness | - He should not be in debt to anyone and as such would have no burdens or worries associated with repayment of debt. And when he reflects on his freedom from debt he feels bliss and happiness. |
| The bliss of blamelessness | - He should be blameless because he is free of blameless actions of body, speech and mind. And when he reflects on his blameless life he feels bliss and happiness. |

The Buddha also declared to Anāthapindika that there were five desirable, pleasant and agreeable things to a householder which are rare in this world. They are long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven. He then said, "But of these five things, householder, I do not teach that they are to be obtained by prayer or by vows. If one could obtain these by prayers and vows then

who would not do so?”

“For a noble householder who wishes to have long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm it is not befitting that he should pray for long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven or take delight in doing so. He should rather follow a path of life that is conducive to long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven. By doing so he will obtain long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven”.

Anguttara Nikāya



one obtains long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm. He said that one obtains these not by prayer but by perfection of confidence (in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha), perfection of virtue, perfection of generosity and perfection of wisdom.

And so we have in simple language a fundamental concept of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha did not encourage His devotees to pray and take vows. Instead, He encouraged them to lead a moral, virtuous, and generous life in wisdom. The householder would then receive long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm. The Buddha declared that Devas (Divine beings such as gods and angels) were compassionate beings who enjoyed helping the virtuous just as humans enjoyed doing so. They could not, however, change the kamma of any individual.

The Buddha also explained to Anāthapindika the effects of gifts given carelessly and with a lack of respect. The Buddha said: "Whether one gives coarse or choice alms, if one gives without respect and politeness, not with one's own hand, gives only leftovers, and gives without belief in the result of actions, then when one is reborn, as a result of giving alms in this manner, one's heart will have no inclination for fine food and clothing, for fine vehicles, etc. A man will find that his wife, children and servants will not obey him, nor listen to him, nor pay respect to him. And why is that so? It is because that is the result of actions done without respect."

At one time Anāthapindika had given all his wealth away and due to some unexpected misfortune did not have rich food as was customary to give to the Sangha and the needy. He continued, however, to give away whatever he had. The Buddha then addressed Anāthapindika, who was rich in wisdom, and encouraged him in meditation by explaining the various benefits of wholesome actions. Comparing Anāthapindika to a rich merchant named Velama of past eras who was equally generous, the Buddha said: "More beneficial than large donations to the unworthy would be a single feeding of a noble disciple who is a Sotāpanna. And

progressively more beneficial than a single feeding of a Sotāpanna is the feeding of a noble disciple who has attained Sakadāgāmi, Anāgami and Arahantship. And even more beneficial than alms to a noble disciple who has attained Arahantship would be the feeding of a Pacceka Buddha. And even more beneficial than feeding a Pacceka Buddha would be the giving of alms and building of monasteries for a Supreme Buddha. But better yet than gifts to the Buddha would be taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in confidence and observing the five precepts to perfection. And still more beneficial than taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and observing the precepts to perfection would be one moment of all-encompassing radiation of compassion and loving-kindness to all living beings. Best of all, however, would be to cultivate, even for the time of a finger snap, insight into the impermanence of all things (insight meditation). And thus the Buddha explained the benefits of wholesome deeds and the supremacy of meditation on insight.

This also illustrates the Buddha's graduated method of teaching where He started a householder on generosity and moved him gradually to virtue, meditation on loving-kindness, and finally to insight. Without first mastering generosity and virtue and the all-encompassing meditation of loving-kindness one cannot contemplate the impermanence of all phenomena, for in the peace and quiet that is required for insight, pangs of conscience and other dark thoughts may arise.

The Buddha emphasized the importance of mental culture on another occasion. Anāthapindika, together with one hundred noble men, had visited the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery, saluted Him, and sat respectfully awaiting His Teachings. The Buddha addressed them and said, "Be sure you householders provide the monastic community with clothing, food, shelter and medicine. But you should not be satisfied with that. May you also from time to time strive to enter and abide in the joy of (meditative) seclusion."

The Buddha also emphasized the necessity of virtue before one could embark on mental culture. He said, “ If the heart is corrupted then all actions, words, and thoughts are tainted. Such a person will be carried away by his passions and will have an unhappy death just as the gables, rafters and walls of a badly roofed house, being unprotected, will rot when drenched in rain.”

Anguttara Nikāya

On another occasion the Buddha explained to Anāthapindika the attainment of Sotāpanna, the first stage of sainthood. He explained that when the five fearsome evils have completely disappeared in a person, the four attributes of stream entry are present, and the noble method is wisely understood, a person could regard himself as a Sotāpanna. The Buddha then elaborated on this brief statement. He explained that one who kills, steals, indulges in sexual misconduct, tells lies and takes intoxicants generates five fearsome evils both in the present and future and experiences pain and grief in mind. Whosoever keeps away from the five vices, for him the five fearsome evils are eliminated. The person possesses the four attributes of stream entry when he has unshakeable confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, observes the precepts flawlessly and has penetrated the noble method known as the doctrine of dependent origination.

Anguttara Nikāya

Anāthapindika had a long and happy life in the Dhamma. One day when he was sick and in great pain, he requested the monks to visit him at his home. Sāriputta and Ānanda, out of compassion for the great benefactor of the Sangha, visited him. Sāriputta calmed Anāthapindika’s mind by reminding him that he was a Sotāpanna, and as such on the path to enlightenment. He could not fall away from the Dhamma or obtain rebirth in one of the unhappy plains.

Sāriputta said:

“When one has confidence in the Tathāgata,

*Unshakable and well established,
And good conduct built on virtue,
Dear to the Noble Ones and praised,
When one has confidence in the Sangha,
And views that have been corrected,
They say that one is not poor,
That one's life is not in vain.*

*Therefore the person of intelligence
Remembering the Buddha's teaching,
Should be devoted to confidence and virtue,
To confidence and vision of the Dhamma."*

Samyutta Nikāya

Through the strength of this contemplation Anāthapindika recalled his virtues and his confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. These thoughts relaxed Anāthapindika's mind and gave him great happiness. The excruciating pain disappeared.

Anāthapindika was nearing death. Having great respect for Sāriputta and confidence in him, Anāthapindika requested his presence "out of compassion." Sāriputta, accompanied by Ānanda, gave an inspiring sermon on non-attachment. Anāthapindika was moved to tears by the profound discourse, the likes of which he had never heard before. Sāriputta then informed him that such profound discourses were usually taught to the Sangha, not to white-clothed lay disciples. Anāthapindika then urged Sāriputta not to restrict the advanced teachings just to the Sangha. He said, "Let such talks on the Dhamma be given to white-clad lay disciples also, for there are those with just a little dust in their eyes. If they do not hear such teachings they will be lost. Some may be able to understand." Shortly after Sāriputta and Ānanda left, Anāthapindika died and was reborn in the Tusita heaven as a Deva. His gratitude and reverence for the Buddha were so great that he was drawn to Jetavana where the Buddha was residing. That night he came in splendour to Jetavana to praise the

glory of the Buddha, His Teaching, and His chief disciple. Saluting the Buddha he said:

*“This indeed is that Jeta’s Grove,
The resort of the Order of Seers,
Dwelt in by the Dhamma King,
A place that gives joy to me.*

*By action, knowledge and righteousness,
By virtue and an excellent life,
By this are mortals purified,
Not by clan or by wealth.*

*Therefore a person who is wise,
Out of regard for his own good,
Should carefully examine the Dhamma,
Thus he is purified therein.*

*Sāriputta truly is endowed with wisdom,
With virtue and with inner peace,
Even a monk that has gone beyond,
At best can only equal him.”*

The Buddha declared Anāthapindika to be His chief lay male benefactor. His generosity, virtue and exemplary behaviour are an example to all lay disciples. Many Buddhists emulate his lifestyle and use him as a role model.



CHAPTER 32

Visākhā

In the City of Bhaddiya, in the kingdom of Magadha, there lived an extremely rich merchant named Mendaka. In a previous birth, during the time of a famine, he and his family had given their last provisions to a Pacceka Buddha. Resulting from this heartfelt gift, Mendaka and his family, (whom kamma had brought together again) had provisions in their home which could not be exhausted despite the fact that they still continued to practise generosity to the extreme. His son, Dhananjaya, and daughter-in-law, Sumanādevi, had an exquisitely beautiful daughter named Visākhā. They lived in extreme wealth and comfort and were well-known for their generosity, which they practised to all.

One day, when Visākhā was seven years old, the Buddha visited Bhaddiya with a large retinue of monks. When Mendaka heard of the Buddha's arrival he called his young granddaughter and instructed her to gather her maidservants and go out to greet the Buddha. Visākhā did as she was told. She paid homage to the Buddha and prepared to listen to His teaching. The Buddha instructed Visākhā on the Dhamma and established her and her entourage of 500 maidservants in the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. Mendaka, his wife, son, daughter-in-law and many other servants of the household who were present, also attained the first stage of sainthood.

The kingdom of Magadha was ruled by the righteous King Bimbisāra. King Pasenadi Kosala, feeling that such a generous and well-respected family would be an asset to his kingdom, asked his friend, King Bimbisāra, if Dhananjaya and his family would move to Kosala where they could be an example to his subjects. King Bimbisāra complied with his friend's request. Dhananjaya and his family moved to Kosala where they lived an exemplary life whilst practising the Dhamma. Visākhā grew up in luxury with the opportunity to practise generosity and the Dhamma, to which she listened frequently.

At that time, there lived in Sāvatti a rich merchant named Migara who had a son named Punnavaddhana. Despite his parents' pleas, Punnavaddhana had refused to marry, insisting that his bride should be an exquisite beauty who possessed the five maidenly attributes: beauty of hair, teeth, skin, youth and form. Her hair had to be glossy and thick, reaching down to her ankles. Her teeth had to be white and even like a row of pearls. Her skin had to be of golden hue, soft and flawless. She had to be in the peak of youth, about sixteen. She had to have a beautiful, feminine figure, not too fat and not too thin. Migara, in desperation, sent a team of Brāhmins to search throughout the kingdom for one who possessed all of his son's requirements.

At this time, the exquisitely beautiful Visākhā, accompanied by her maidservants, was on her way to the river to bathe when they were caught by an unexpected storm. The maids ran for shelter while Visākhā walked calmly and gracefully to the shelter. Migara's Brāhmins, seeing the graceful Visākhā, questioned her as to why she had not run to avoid getting wet. Visākhā informed Migara's men that it was not appropriate for a maiden in her fine clothes to run, just as it was not appropriate for a king in royal attire, a royal elephant dressed for the parade, or a serene monk in robes, to run. Pleased with her reply and her exquisite beauty they went back and informed Migara that a suitable bride had been found for Punnavaddhana.

Both families were happy with the arrangement. And so it was that Visākhā, with great ceremony, was given in marriage by her father to Punnavaddhana. Her father, who was devoted to her, provided Visākhā with many gifts and an exquisite jewelled headdress that reached all the way down her long hair to her feet, as a wedding gift. He also advised her on the appropriate conduct for a married woman. The advice he gave his daughter was as follows:

1. As long as you live with your in-laws you should not tell the faults of your husband and in-laws to outsiders.
2. If any of your neighbours speak ill of your husband or in-laws it should not be encouraged or repeated to them.
3. Lend money and articles to those who will return them.
4. Do not lend anything to those who will not return them.
5. When a relative or friend is in need you should help them without seeking repayment.
6. When you see your husband or in-laws approach you should stand up with respect.
7. You should not eat before your husband or in-laws.
8. You should not go to bed before your husband or in-laws.
9. You should regard your husband and your in-laws as a flame; carefully and with respect.
10. You should look up to and respect your husband and in-laws as divinities.

Whilst this advice that Dhananjaya gave to his daughter would not be acceptable to most modern women, it was what was expected of women at the time of the Buddha. Visākhā, who abided by this advice and instruction, was considered a model wife.

As Visākhā's beauty and generosity were well-known many well-wishers came to honour the beautiful bride and shower her with gifts. With her love for generosity, Visākhā distributed these gifts to the needy in Sāvatti. So pleased were the people with her act that she soon became everybody's favourite. As was the custom at that time, Visākhā lived with her husband's family.



ascetics. Even though the Buddha and His disciples lived in a monastery close to their home, they were not invited to Migāra's house. One day Migāra invited the naked ascetics and asked Visākhā to attend to their needs. Visākhā was horrified at their lack of modesty and refused. This caused much anger among the naked ascetics who condemned Migāra for bringing a female devotee of the Ascetic Gotama into his house.

Shortly after this incident, when Migāra was eating rich rice pudding in a golden bowl, a Buddhist monk came for alms. Even though Migāra could see the monk he ignored him and continued with his meal. Visākhā, who was fanning her father-in-law, requested the monk to leave by saying, "Pass on, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law eats stale food."

Migāra, who ate rich, fresh food in a golden bowl, was furious at these words which he felt were an insult. He commanded Visākhā to leave his house and go back to her parents. Instead, she called in an independent mediator to judge her conduct. She explained to the adviser that the rich food her father-in-law was eating were benefits resulting from his past good deeds. As such, instead of performing wholesome deeds which would ensure continued prosperity, he was "eating stale fare".

When Migāra understood the meaning of Visākhā's words he asked her forgiveness. Visākhā, however, decided that she no longer wished to live with her husband's family. This was not the first time that she had been accused wrongfully by Migāra. She decided to go back to her parents. Migāra, who had finally realized the noble qualities of his daughter-in-law, was horrified. He begged her to remain. Visākhā agreed to remain if she was allowed to invite the Buddha and His retinue to their home for meals. When Migāra agreed, Visākhā invited the Buddha and His retinue of monks for their meal and made arrangements for the preparation of rich food.

After the meal the Buddha dispensed the Dhamma. Migāra and his wife, who were both spiritually developed as a result of past

meritorious effort, both attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. After this, Migāra, who was deeply grateful to Visākhā, called her Migāra Mata, or mother of Migāra, and respected her as he would his own mother. He also became a devotee of the Buddha.

In great joy, Visākhā continued to perform generosity to the Buddha and His retinue of monks. She had ten sons and ten daughters whom she brought up in the Dhamma. Being fond of beautiful clothes and ornaments, Visākhā indulged herself, always dressing her best in exquisite garments. One day she accidentally left her priceless jewelled head-dress at the Jetavana, the monastery in which the Buddha was residing. Feeling that an item left in the monastery should not be taken back, she offered it to the Buddha. On being told that priceless treasures were of no value to His retinue of monks, Visākhā offered the jewelled head-dress for sale with the idea of building monasteries and providing the requisites with the money generated. Unable to find a buyer who could afford the exquisite jewelled head-dress, she bought it herself and used the money to build the Pubbārāma Monastery (also known as the Mansion of Migāra's Mother) to support the Buddha and His retinue of monks and nuns.

Visākhā was overjoyed with her gift to the Buddha. On the day that she gifted the monastery to the Buddha, she sang songs of joy and walked around the Pubbārāma together with her children and grandchildren. The Buddha informed the people that Visākhā was singing songs of joy because she had just fulfilled an aspiration made many world cycles ago to be the chief female lay disciple of the Buddha.

The Buddha spent nine rainy seasons at the Pubbārāma Monastery, during which time He dispensed many Suttas and helped many persons. On one occasion, He was residing at the Pubbārāma when a disturbance attracted His attention. He saw a dishevelled Visākhā in wet clothes running towards Him in tears. Visākhā was bathing in the river when the news of the death of her favourite grandchild, Datta, reached her. Unable to control her grief, she ran to the Buddha for solace and comfort.

The Buddha questioned her as to the cause of Visākhā's grief and was told that it was because her beloved grandchild had died. She went on to explain how much happiness the child had brought her. The Buddha then asked her if she would be happy if she had as many grandchildren as there were citizens in Sāvatti. Visākhā confirmed that she would indeed be very happy as her grandchildren brought her untold happiness. The Buddha then asked Visākhā how many of Sāvatti's citizens died each day. Visākhā replied that many died each day. The Buddha then explained to her the impermanence of life. "Death," he said, "comes to all living beings. Think then how unhappy you will be, for you will have so many more grandchildren, some of whom will die each day. Surely then you will be coming like this to me for comfort many, many more times."

Visākhā reflected on the Buddha's words and realized that the stronger her attachment, the greater would be her grief at separation. Understanding through realization that all component things are impermanent, she composed herself and left the Buddha. Visākhā was able to understand this because she had reached the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna, at a young age after listening to the Buddha's teaching.

Visākhā also helped many noble ladies in the Dhamma. Once when she took a large gathering of ladies to hear the Dhamma she was horrified to see that they had consumed large quantities of intoxicants and behaved in an unladylike manner. She then asked the Buddha how humans had first become involved with intoxicants. The Buddha then dispensed the Kumbha Jātaka, where a man had found fermented fruit and water in the crevice of a tree and started to consume the fermented liquid to obtain a false feeling of well-being.

The Buddha also helped Visākhā on another occasion, when she was upset at some unfair taxes that had been levied upon her. Visākhā had mailed a parcel to some relatives and the border guards had charged an unreasonably high levy on the goods.

Visākhā had complained to the king but, due to pressures of state affairs, he had ignored her complaint. Annoyed and angry, Visākhā visited the Buddha for solace. The Buddha calmed her mind by saying:

*?Painful is all subjection,
Blissful is complete control.
People are troubled by common concerns,
Hard to escape are the bonds.”*

These words of wisdom from the Buddha helped Visākhā put this minor irritation in perspective. The Buddha’s advice is as valid today as it was 2,500 years ago. So strong are the bonds of craving and attachment that often we are angered and affected by small issues, quite a number of which are outside our control and trivial when compared to other issues of greater consequence that afflict mankind.

Visākhā often questioned the Buddha on subjects that interested her, and the Anguttara Nikāya contains three suttas that the Buddha dispensed to her in answer to her questions. In one instance Visākhā asked the Buddha what qualities in a woman would enable her to conquer this world and the next. The Buddha replied:

“She conquers this world by industry, care for her servants, love for her husband and by guarding his property. She conquers the other world by confidence, virtue, generosity and wisdom.”

The Buddha also instructed Visākhā on the appropriate way to observe the religious holidays (uposatha). Visākhā had observed the religious holiday and come to Him for instruction on the best way to observe the holiday. After first informing her of the wrong ways of observing the holidays, the Buddha informed her of the correct way by saying that she should observe the eight precepts, reflect on the greatness and good qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, reflect on the virtues of the Devas, and reflect on her own virtues. The Buddha then went on to describe the happy and carefree life of the Devas and concluded by saying, “Miserable is

the glory of the humans compared to such heavenly bliss.” The Buddha described the wonders of heavenly birth as He knew that Visākhā, who was a Sotāpanna, would at death enjoy such heavenly bliss.

One day when the Buddha was residing in the Pubbārāma, Visākhā approached the Buddha and asked for eight boons. The Buddha informed her that The Perfect One was beyond the practice of granting boons. She then informed Him that these boons would be of great benefit to the Sangha and that they were allowable boons. With the Buddha’s consent, Visākhā asked the Buddha to be allowed to give the following gifts to the Order:

1. Robes for the rains, as monks trying to preserve their robes sometimes ran half-naked in the rains, which was not appropriate.
2. Food for arriving monks, as monks who had arrived in Sāvatti after a long journey were tired and did not know the town. As such seeking alms would be difficult for them.
3. Food for monks setting out on a journey, so that they would be strong and well-fed for the journey ahead.
4. Medicine for sick monks, as sick monks were in pain and suffering.
5. Food for sick monks, as sick monks were not in a position to seek alms.
6. Food for monks tending the sick, as they often did not get food because they went on the alms round after tending the sick and were late for their alms round.
7. Regular distribution of rice gruel for the morning, as it was healthy and nourishing for the Sangha who do not partake in food after noon.

8. Bathing robes for nuns to bathe in the river, as nuns who did not have bathing robes often had to expose their bodies while bathing, which was not appropriate.

The Buddha then questioned Visākhā on what inner benefits she expected from the giving of these gifts. Visākhā replied that often the Sangha who have spent the rains at different locations come to the Buddha and ask Him about a monk (or nun) who has passed away and question Him as to the place of rebirth. The Blessed one will then explain his (or her) attainment and place of rebirth. I shall approach the monk and ask, "Lord, did that Bhikkhu (Bhikkhuni) ever come to Sāvatti? And if he answers yes, I shall conclude that surely a rains cloth will have been used by this Bhikkhu, or visitors' food, or food for one going on a journey, or food for the sick, or food for those tending the sick, or rice gruel. And when I reflect thus, I shall be glad and happy. When my mind is happy my body will be tranquil. When my body is tranquil I shall feel pleasure. When I feel pleasure my mind will become concentrated. This will result in the development of the spiritual faculties and powers and the enlightenment faculties. This, Lord, is the benefit that I foresee for myself."

Praising Visākhā for asking the eight boons, the Buddha granted her permission to give gifts to the Sangha as requested. The manner in which Visākhā gives gifts is noteworthy. Not only is the intention intense but she holds the intensity during the time of preparation (before), during the time of giving and when reflecting on the gift (after) the act of generosity. This intense happiness or volition before, during, and after the act of generosity ensures maximum results. Giving with the intention of purifying oneself, developing one's mind, and attaining Enlightenment is the proper way to give a gift and we should all learn from Visākhā, the Buddha's chief female lay benefactor, on the appropriate way to practise generosity.

Because of her generosity to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, the Buddha declared that Visākhā was His chief female lay benefactor. In addition to providing the requisites to the

Buddha and the Sangha, Visākhā also helped with issues and disputes that arose among the nuns. She led a long and healthy life and passed away at the age of 120. Visākhā, who possessed the five attributes of maidenly beauty, was said to have been exquisitely beautiful to the end, retaining her youthful form and beauty throughout her latter years.



CHAPTER 33

Citta

Citta was a wealthy merchant who owned a small hamlet named Migapathaka and a forest named Ambarukkhavana. He presented the Ambarukkhavana to the Buddha and His disciples and built a monastery for the Noble One to use as a residence. Citta was one of the Buddha's model lay disciples. Just as the Buddha encouraged His monks to emulate Sāriputta and Moggallāna, He encouraged young men to emulate Citta, by saying, "Should a devoted mother wish to encourage her beloved only son in a proper way, she may tell him to emulate the householders Citta and Hatthaka. They are the guiding students for my lay disciples."

When deciding on the Noble One foremost in expounding the Dhamma, the Buddha appointed the Bhikkhu Punnā Mantāniputta (who helped Ānanda attain Sotāpanna) and the nun Dhammadinna. Likewise, among the laity, the householder Citta was appointed by the Buddha as the lay disciple foremost in expounding the Dhamma.

This was not Citta's first encounter with the Buddha. The Jātaka stories relate that they were closely associated in a former birth. Citta was the Bodhisatta's servant in a past birth and followed his master into renunciation (Jātaka 488). He was a disciple of Mahā Kacchana and had learned analytical and organizational skills,

which helped him to expound the Dhamma in a manner that people could very easily understand.

Citta paid great respect and reverence to a certain Bhikkhu named Sudhamma who had entered the Noble Order after hearing the Dhamma from Citta. One day Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Anuruddha, Ānanda and several other great disciples arrived at Macchikāsanda, the city in which Citta lived. Citta approached them and listened to the Dhamma. Sāriputta dispensed a profound discourse, which resulted in Citta's attaining the second stage of sainthood, Sakadāgāmi. Citta immediately invited the distinguished elders for the following day's meals. Afterwards he realized that he had left out Sudhamma, to whom he had previously extended his hospitality consistently. Approaching Sudhamma, he let him know of the invitation.

When Sudhamma found out about Citta's invitation to others he was suffused with jealousy and reprimanded Citta for not having informed him earlier. Even though Citta had since invited him, Sudhamma scornfully declined. However, he could not refuse Citta's invitation. He joined the others as if nothing had happened and praised Citta's hospitality. But then he showed his true jealousy by adding scornfully that the meal would have been complete if Citta had offered cream cakes. Citta replied that his favourite monk's behaviour reminded him of a story of a hybrid of a cock and a crow. The story illustrated the fact that jealousy and the refusal of the invitation were inappropriate behaviours for a monk. And criticizing the food showed poor manners towards a householder. Sudhamma was insulted by this comparison and left abruptly. Citta asked him to visit the Buddha and explain what had happened.

Sudhamma went to the Buddha and complained to Him about the unfavourable comparison made by Citta. The Buddha, however, admonished Sudhamma by saying that his behaviour was inappropriate for a Bhikkhu. Not only was it inappropriate for him to have refused Citta's invitation through jealousy, but it was also inappropriate that he should have insulted his generous host by

complaining about the food served. The Buddha asked, “How could you insult a faithful lay disciple like Citta?” At a meeting of the Sangha where the Bhikkhus’ transgressions were discussed it was decided that Sudhamma should ask Citta’s forgiveness for his behaviour.

Sudhamma then set out to beg forgiveness but on reaching Citta’s house turned back in embarrassment. When the Buddha heard that Sudhamma did not apologize to Citta He had another monk accompany Sudhamma to give him the confidence required to own up to his inappropriate behaviour.

From this incident we see a very significant aspect of the Buddha’s teaching. The Buddha always encouraged persons who had done wrong deeds to ask for forgiveness. But forgiveness was asked from those whom one had wronged. The Buddha realized that people make mistakes and even Bhikkhus from time to time behave badly. He did not grant forgiveness for such deeds. Forgiveness for such deeds could only be granted by the person who had been wronged. The wrongdoer reduces the negative effect of his wrong act by genuine regret. But forgiveness can only be received from the wronged. Whilst one may feel better about the misdeed when admitting wrongdoing to a friend or colleague, they cannot reduce or mitigate the wrong. That can be done only through true regret to the wronged. The wronged should then graciously accept the apology and grant forgiveness.

Forgiveness from the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha that Buddhists ask for in their daily reciting is a forgiveness for wrongs done to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Buddhists observe the precepts (modes of conduct) daily but often break the vows they have taken. As these vows are taken of their own free will Buddhists ask for forgiveness from the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha when they break the precepts. Forgiveness that Buddhists request is for transgressions of the precepts they take daily and for other wrongful deeds they may have committed against the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Buddhist do not ask the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha for forgiveness for wrongful deeds they may have done to another person. Forgiveness for these should be obtained

from the person to whom the wrongful deed was done.

The first documented teaching by Citta relates an event where some senior Bhikkhus were sitting together in the entrance of the monastery discussing whether fetters and sense objects are one and the same. Some of the monks felt that they were the same, while some felt that they were not. Citta joined the gathering and the monks asked him his opinion. He declared that in his view fetters and sense objects were different not only in name but also in meaning.

Citta then used an example to illustrate his viewpoint. He said that just as a pair of black and white oxen tied to a cart were not fetters to each other but were both fettered by a single rope or yoke strap, the sense faculties do not bind the external objects. Instead, they are bound or yoked by craving. The Bhikkhus praised Citta's understanding of the Dhamma and said that he must surely possess the eye of wisdom.

On another occasion a Bhikkhu named Kāmabhu recited a stanza dispensed by the Buddha and asked Citta for its meaning. The stanza with which he needed help was as follows:

*“The faultless chariot with its one axle,
And white canopy rolls.
See him coming without blemish,
Without ties, the one who has crossed the stream.”*

After some reflection Citta explained that the Buddha was referring to an Arahant, who, without blemish or ties, has crossed the stream. He has done away with greed, hatred and delusion and is safe from the ocean of craving. The chariot is the body, the one axle is mindfulness, the smooth, frictionless holding together of the parts (faultless) is virtue and the white canopy is the final deliverance of emancipation. Impressed by his explanation, the Bhikkhu Kāmabhu thanked Citta and praised him by saying that he had surely achieved great wisdom to be able to explain such complex teachings.

One day after some Bhikkhus had partaken of alms at Citta's house, he accompanied them back to the monastery. It was an extremely hot and dusty day and the monks were perspiring freely. The youngest Bhikkhu, Mahaka, remarked that it was very hot and that wind and rain would certainly be welcome. In this instance Mahaka was not just making an observation. He, who had supernormal powers, was asking permission to use these powers to activate rain. When permission was granted and Mahaka did procure rain to refresh his companions, Citta was very impressed.

Citta then approached Mahaka and asked him to demonstrate more of his supernormal powers. The Buddha had specifically forbidden monks to show off their supernormal powers to the householders for purposes of impressing them or creating awe. Mahaka, however, was very young. Enjoying the praise and attention he was receiving, he placed his coat on a bale of hay and went inside his meditation cell. Then, closing the door, he created a tremendously powerful beam that penetrated through the keyhole and burnt the hay while it left the coat untouched.

Impressed by the powers of one so young, Citta offered to support Mahaka for life. Mahaka, however, realized that he had disobeyed the instruction of the Buddha by showing off his powers. Refusing Citta's generosity, he left the city in search of a place where he would not be known.

Citta used his knowledge to help both believers and non-believers. A naked ascetic by the name of Kassapa, who was a family friend, decided to visit Citta when he visited Migapathaka. Citta questioned him as to how long he had practised this form of asceticism. His friend replied that he had been an ascetic for thirty years. Citta then asked Kassapa if he had attained any superhuman states of bliss or supernormal insight. Kassapa replied that he had not, that all he had done was to go about naked, shaving his head and dusting his seat.

Kassapa then questioned Citta on how long he had been a follower of the Buddha. When Citta replied that he had been a lay disciple for thirty years, Kassapa asked him if he had attained any superhuman states. Citta replied that he had most certainly attained the four Jhānas of mental ecstasy and that if Kassapa questioned the Blessed One He would confirm that no fetters bound him to the sense spheres. Kassapa immediately realized that Citta was Anāgami or non-returner, for it was only those who had attained the stage of Anāgami who were assured of birth in a non-sense sphere Brahma world.



had attained such a high stage of spiritual development when he himself, worn out through the practice of extreme austerities, had gained none.

Reflecting on his friend's achievements, Kassapa asked Citta to help him take the robes under the Blessed One. He was duly ordained and before long attained Arahantship. Other friends of Citta's such as Sudhamma, Godatta, and Isidatta also became Bhikkhus after discussing the Dhamma with him. They all attained the supreme bliss of Arahantship and surpassed Citta who reached only the third stage of sainthood. The text does not specify as to why Citta had not considered joining the Noble Order when he had encouraged many of his friends to do so. It is assumed that it is because of his personal life and some obligations he had that necessitated that he remain as a householder.

The laymen, Bhikkhus and Devas respected Citta as a great teacher. When he fell ill just prior to his death, the Devas appeared to him and urged him to aspire to be a world monarch in his next life. Citta then informed them that he was seeking something nobler and higher than to be a world monarch in his next life. He was aspiring for the unconditioned Nibbāna. The Devas were obviously not aware that Citta had reached the third stage of sainthood. Those who attain Anāgami are reborn in the Suddhāvāssa Brahma Realm where they eventually attain Arahantship.

Citta's relatives, unable to view the Devas, thought that he was delirious as it seemed as if he was talking to himself. He reassured them by affirming that he was talking to invisible divine beings. Then, at the request of the Devas, he gave his last advice to those gathered. Citta requested them to have trust and confidence in the Buddha and the Dhamma and to remain unswervingly generous to the Sangha.



CHAPTER 34

Rohini

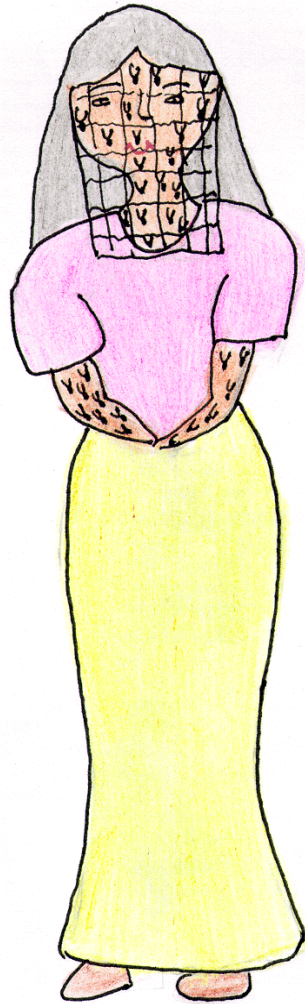
Rohini was one of the Buddha's cousins and the sister of Anuruddha. When the ladies of the court decided to follow Pajāpati Gothami and join the order of nuns, Rohini declined.

When Anuruddha visited Kapilavatthu with a large retinue of monks, all his relatives came to the monastery to pay their respects. Rohini, however, did not come. When Anuruddha inquired as to why his sister had not come he was informed that she was embarrassed to face people as she was suffering from an unsightly skin rash. Anuruddha asked that she be brought to his presence. Rohini came with her face covered by a veil.

Anuruddha asked Rohini to construct an assembly hall for the monks and nuns, as her affliction was of kammic origin. As she did not have the money needed to construct an assembly hall, she decided to sell her jewels to obtain the required funds. With the help of her Sākya cousins and under the guidance of the Ven. Anuruddha, an assembly hall was built for the Buddha and His retinue. Upon the completion of the structure, Rohini's unsightly rash disappeared. Rohini then invited the Buddha and His retinue for a meal.

The Buddha, having asked on whose account the assembly hall was built and who had provided the meal, was informed of Rohini's surprising story. He then informed her of the cause of her

unsightly rash. Many births ago she had been the chief consort of the King of Benares. She had had a falling out with one of the king's dancing girls, whom he favoured. Rohini, who was jealous of the dancing girl, had secured scabs from an infected person, crushed them to a powder



Pathumi (12)

This had led to an infection that had caused an ugly rash on the skin of the dancing girl. The kammic effect of this unwholesome act was the ugly rash that Rohini had. The wholesome effects of the building of the assembly hall had helped to nullify the effects of this evil kamma.

After listening to the Dhamma, Rohini attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotāpanna. She became a supporter of the Buddha and His monks and continued to perform many meritorious deeds. At death she passed away to the Tāvātimsa Heaven where she was born as the very beautiful consort of Sakka, the king of the Tāvātimsa Heaven.



CHAPTER 35

Jivaka

Prince Abhaya, the son of King Bimbisāra, was riding through the city when he saw a flock of crows circling and cawing loudly around a small bundle. Stopping his carriage, he investigated the sound and found a newborn baby boy who had been left to die amongst the garbage on the roadside. Upon inquiry he learned that a courtesan had discarded her illegitimate son whom she felt was a burden, and had left him to die.

Prince Abhaya was transfused with compassion for the newborn babe that still clung to life despite its ugly surroundings. He decided to adopt the baby as his own. The baby was named Jivaka Komāra Bhacca – Jivaka, meaning ‘life’, because of his will to live, and Komāra Bhacca, which meant ‘adopted by a prince’.

Jivaka led a privileged life in the palace. His friends, however, often teased him as he had no mother. Jivaka, who was embarrassed by the teasing, questioned his father about his origin. When he heard about his origins and his will to live he decided that he would one day grow up to be a preserver of life. He felt that he had no real heritage or family as he was only the adopted son of the prince. Physicians, however, were treated with great respect. Determined to earn the respect he felt he lacked due to his birth, Jivaka decided to go to the University of Taxila to become a physician.

Jivaka approached Disapamok, a well-known scholar, for his

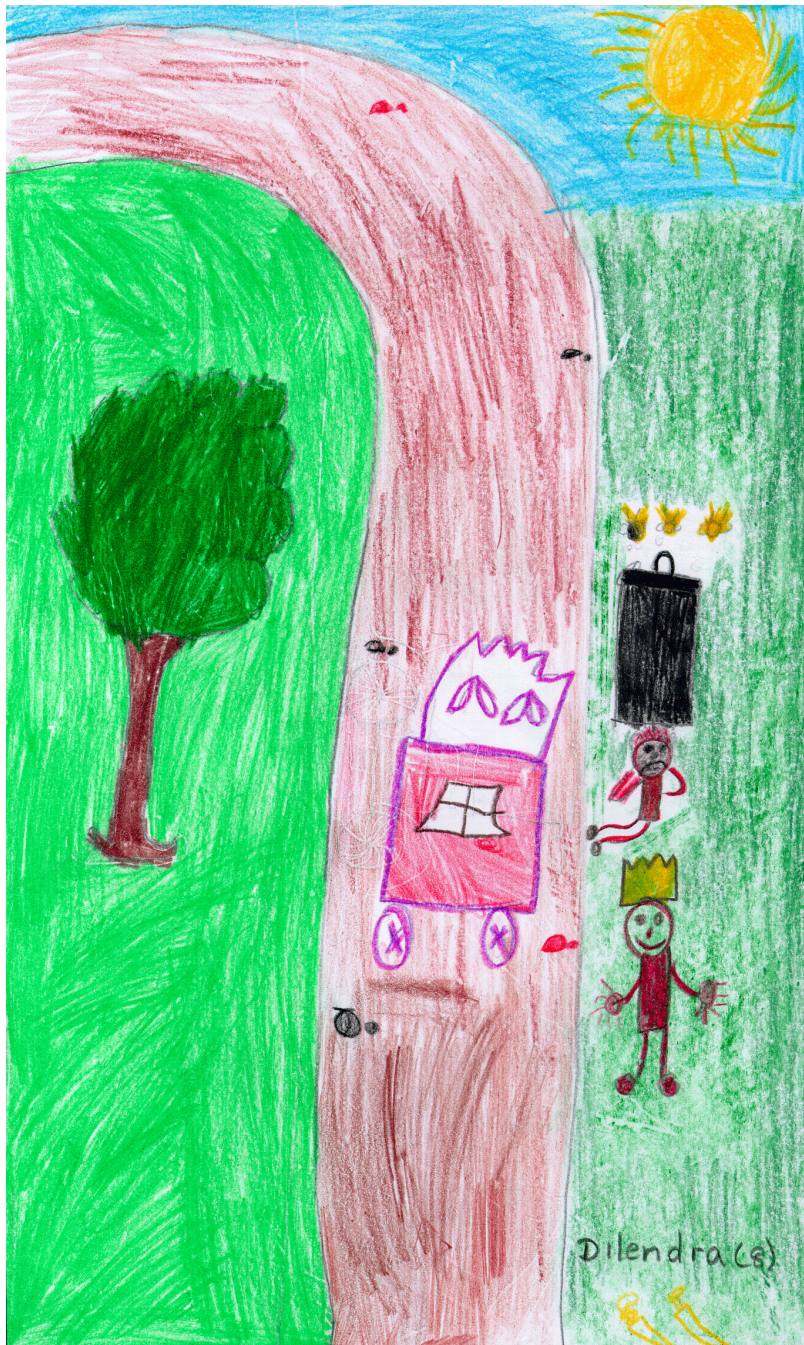
training. At this time Sakka, the King of the Heavens, was observing the world. He realized that it was time for Jivaka, who had in past births aspired to be the physician of the Buddha, to begin his training. Sakka, however, wanted to ensure that Jivaka had more than just the best training available in India. This was the young man who would have the privilege to be the physician of the Buddha. Sakka decided to take a hand in the training of young Jivaka so that he would have celestial knowledge in the art of medicine. With this in view, He entered the body of Disapamok. Jivaka excelled in his studies. Disapamok, however, soon realized that the training that he was providing was being influenced by celestial beings. The knowledge that was being imparted through him far excelled his knowledge of medicine. Jivaka quickly learned medicines and cures of which Disapamok himself had no knowledge. Jivaka completed in seven years the physicians training which usually took eleven years.

Realizing that Jivaka's education was complete, Disapamok asked him to go forth and bring back a plant, herb or root that could not be used for medicinal purposes for the preservation of life. After travelling far and wide Jivaka returned to his teacher to inform him that no such plant, herb, or root existed. All of nature's treasures were beneficial for the preservation of life. The joyous teacher then praised his pupil by informing him that his education was complete. Jivaka had surpassed his teacher in knowledge.

Jivaka decided to go back to Rājagaha to his adoptive father. On the way he stopped to rest in a city named Saletha. He soon heard that the young daughter of the city's wealthiest nobleman was sick. Despite the ministering of many well-known physicians, she had suffered from severe headaches for seven years. Jivaka approached the nobleman, as he was confident that he could cure the maiden. The maiden, however, was not impressed by the very young man who claimed he could cure her when older, well-known physicians had failed. Offering his services for free, Jivaka continued to declare boldly that he could cure her.

Gathering herbs and roots, Jivaka prepared the medicine which he

then administered to her through her nostrils. Before long the maiden's headaches disappeared. The grateful nobleman showered Jivaka with gifts and gold and provided him with a golden chariot. Jivaka approached Prince Abhaya's palace in great style.



Jivaka thanked him for his love, compassion, and caring. Prince Abhaya, however, returned all the wealth to Jivaka and informed him that he owed him naught as he was his true son and heir. He then told him that during his absence he had found out the full story of his origin. His mother, Sālawathi, was the sought-after courtesan of the kings and nobility. Wanting to retain her freedom, she had discarded the baby whom she felt would be a burden to her. Prince Abhaya had unknowingly adopted his own child as he had loved his son dearly even prior to knowing that he was in fact his own child. Prince Abhaya built a palace to serve as Jivaka's residence and provided him with many servants.

Jivaka's second patient was none other than his own grandfather, King Bimbisāra. The king had a huge growth in his stomach that bled from time to time on his royal robe. So prominent was the growth that his consorts had started to tease the king by saying that he was with child. The king had been treated by all the great physicians of the country to no avail. Prince Abhaya informed Jivaka of his grandfather's plight.

Diagnosing the disease sight unseen, Jivaka immediately prepared the suitable medicine. Then hiding it on his person, he visited the king. After examining the king he administered the medicine that he had brought with him. Before long the king's growth shrank and his wound healed. The grateful king called his entourage of five hundred consorts who had teased him unmercifully by asking if his first-born was to be a boy or a girl, and commanded them to give all their jewellery as a gift to Jivaka. Before long a mound of precious jewellery higher than Jivaka himself was placed at his feet. However, Jivaka refused this payment and requested permission from the king to return the ornaments back to his consorts. Even more impressed by Jivaka's deportment, the king showered him with wealth, gifted him with the royal mango grove and made him the royal physician.

Jivaka's reputation as a great physician grew quickly. He was the physician of kings, noblemen and the Buddha. The text mentions that he operated and successfully removed two tumours from the

brain of a rich merchant who was a good friend of King Bimbisāra. He also operated successfully to remove a blockage in the intestines of a nobleman. In one instance when the Buddha was afflicted with stomach problems, Jivaka prepared the medicine, and applying it on a blue lotus flower, offered it to the Buddha. Jivaka then asked the Buddha to inhale the essence emanating from the flower. The medicine which Jivaka had prepared with devotion and presented so beautifully, cured the Buddha's stomach ailment.

Jivaka had in one instance risked his life to attend a very cruel and vicious king named Chanda Pradyotha. One of the King Pradyotha's subjects had offered him a shawl that had been dropped by a Deva in the forest. Admiring the very beautiful shawl, the king had reflected that he should gift it to Jivaka who had risked his life to save him. Jivaka, however, felt that there was only one person worthy of such a shawl. He in turn offered it to the Buddha. The Buddha accepted the celestial shawl and, as requested by Jivaka, dispensed a sermon on the giving of robes. After listening to the discourse, Jivaka attained the first stage of enlightenment, Sotāpanna. The Buddha felt that keeping such a valuable shawl in the monastery would attract thieves, which would endanger His monks. Addressing Ānanda, he requested that the shawl be cut into strips and resewn so that it would be of little value to thieves. This custom of wearing patched garments still remains among the Sangha. Even their new robes are made of strips of material that are sewn together so that even the robe they wear would help them in the practice of non-attachment.

Jivaka built a monastery in his mango grove so that he could be close to the Buddha when attending to His needs. It was Jivaka who attended to the Buddha's foot when it was cut by the sliver of rock that Devadatta rolled down the hill at Gijjhakuta. It was also Jivaka who treated the Buddha in His last days, when He was overcome by stomach pains.

The Buddha dispensed the Jivaka Sutta when Jivaka questioned him on the controversial question of the kammic effects of eating

meat. The Buddha explained that the eating of meat was not in itself an unwholesome act if the following conditions were met:

Adittha One has not seen the slaughtering of the animal.

Asuta One has not heard that it was killed for his or her consumption.

Aparisamkita There should be no doubt at all in the mind of the person consuming the meat that the animal was not killed for the purpose of his or her consumption.

The Buddha said:

“Taking life, beating, cutting, binding, stealing, lying, fraud, deceit, pretence at knowledge, adultery; this is uncleanliness and not the eating of flesh.

When men are rough and harsh, backbiting, treacherous, without compassion, haughty, ungenerous and do not give anything to anybody; this is uncleanliness and not the eating of flesh.

Anger, pride, obstinacy, antagonism, hypocrisy, envy, ostentation, pride of opinion, interacting with the unrighteous; this is uncleanliness and not the eating of flesh.

When men are of bad morals, refuse to pay their debts, are slanderers, deceitful in their dealings, pretenders, when the vilest of men commit foul deeds; this is uncleanliness and not the eating of flesh.

When men attack living beings either because of greed or hostility and are always bent upon evil, they go to darkness after death and fall headlong into hell; this is uncleanliness and not the eating of flesh.

Jivaka, I have declared that one should not make use of meat if it has been seen, heard or suspected to have been killed on purpose for a monk. I allow the monks meat that is quite pure in three respects: if it has not been seen, heard or suspected to have been killed on purpose for a monk.”

Amagandha Sutta

The Buddha's teaching is known as the middle path. He did not go to extremes or command anyone to do anything. While he gave permission for His monks to be vegetarians if they so wished, He did not state this to be a discipline rule as he felt that doing so would cause unnecessary hardship to His monks.

Buddhists should refrain from eating meat that has been seen, heard or suspected to have been killed for them. Buddhists should also refrain from killing, instigating others to kill or from a livelihood that involves the breeding of animals for killing. Monks have also been instructed in the Vinaya Pitaka to refrain from eating certain types of meat such as snake and elephant flesh, because wild animals are attracted to the smell of such flesh and tend to attack those who have partaken of such meat.

The Buddha has declared that kamma is intention. As such one should not condemn a person just because he is eating meat to sustain himself. This is not the same as a person who is eating meat as a result of intense greed for meat and enjoyment in killing for the palate. Neither should one discourage those who have chosen to refrain from eating meat. A balanced diet can be achieved without meat. Many Buddhists have opted to become vegetarians as it assists them in the practice of loving-kindness.

It was also at Jivaka's request that the Buddha established that monks should sweep the compound of the monastery and attend to other duties that would exercise their bodies. Jivaka, seeing the benefit of exercise for a healthy life, requested this and other mild duties to be performed by the monks to ensure their health. With foresight, love and compassion the devoted Jivaka took care of the physical health of the Buddha and His Sangha.



GLOSSARY

Abhidhamma Pitaka	The books that contain higher teachings of the Buddha that require penetration or realization for full understanding
Anāgāmi	Third stage of spiritual development
Ānāpānasati meditation	Meditation on breathing awareness
Anatta	The doctrine of no soul
Anicca	The doctrine of impermanence
Arahanth	One who has realized the Truth using the teachings of a Buddha
Asankkeyya	Infinite period
Bhavana	Meditation
Bhikku	Buddhist monks
Bhikkuni	Buddhist nuns
Brahmin	Noble One, Arahanth, Also used for persons of the Brahmin caste
Buddha	One With Wisdom, The Enlightened One
Bodhisatta	One on His way to perfection (name given to a Buddha Aspirant)
Dhamma	Truth or the Law

Dāna	Generosity
Deva	Divine or celestial beings
Dosa	Hatred
Dukkha	Suffering
Gāthā	Verses
Jataka Stories	Birth stories of the Bodhisatta
Jhāna	Mental ecstasies
Kamma	Intentional or volitional actions (also known as the cause)
Karuna	Compassion and kindness to relieve others' sorrows
Kathina	Rainy season
Lobha	Greed
Mahā Kappa	World cycle
Mettā	Goodwill and loving-kindness
Moha	Delusion
Mudita	Sympathetic joy in the progress of others
Nibbāna	The Buddhist goal; the total destruction (or absence) of suffering
Pacceka Buddha	One who realizes the truth but cannot teach it to others
Pāli	Language spoken by the Buddha

Paññā	Wisdom
Puthujjana	Worldling; one who has not attained even the first stage of sainthood
Saddhā	Confidence through study and understanding
Sakadāgāmi	Second stage of spiritual development
Samatha meditation	Meditation on mindfulness
Samsāra	The cycle of birth and death
Sangha	Order of the monks and nuns
Sasana	Dispensation of the Buddha
Sikkhapada	Modes of discipline or precepts that the Buddha laid out for His followers
Sila	Morality
Sotāpanna	First stage of spiritual development (One who has entered the stream of Nibbāna)
Supreme Buddha	A Fully Enlightened One who realizes the Truth and then teaches it for the benefit of men and gods
Sutta Pitaka	The books that contain the majority of the teachings of the Buddha
Suttas	Discourses of the Buddha
Tanhā	Craving to cling to pleasant sensations and avert unpleasant sensations. Tanha is the strong feeling that leads to “I want” for my happiness

Thera	Elders, a term used for male Arahants
Theri	Elders, a term used for female Arahants
Upekkhā	Equanimity
Uposata	Day when monastic discipline is recited, later known as a religious holiday
Vinaya Pitaka	Books that contain the code of ethics and discipline for the Sangha
Vipaka	The result of intentional actions (also known as the effect)
Vipassanā meditation	Meditation on insight

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